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CULTURAL HISTORY OF **BUNDELKHAND**

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M.L.NIGAM

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(3rd c B.C. to A.D. 650)

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SUNDEEP PRAKASHAN
DELHI

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Preface

India in her unity in diversity unfolds a large spectrum of the colourful rays of culture which, although deriving strength and energy from a common source, exhibit an unique admixture of ideas and concepts, myth and philosophy and so also the traits and traditions of peoples inhabiting this vast sub-continent. With the varied climatic conditions, abundant natural resources and landscapes and the diverse racial, lingual and religious background of the people, each region of the country has developed its individualistic cultural trends which inspite of a common heritage, differ considerably from each other. Yet, the greatness of Indian culture lies in its power of assimilation of divergent cultural norms and traditions and thereby resulting in an ultimate cultural synthesis which imparts unity amidst diversity to Indian culture. It is thus, all the more important to study and understand the history and culture of each region of the country with a view to analyse the distinct cultural patterns born of geographical, climatic and ethnic variations and so also their interaction to supplement each other to form one composite culture of India.

The Bundelkhand region, lying within the folds of the Vindhyan range of mountains, is a marked geographical unit with a distinct cultural personality of its own. No doubt, the name Bundelkhand itself is comparatively of later origin, as it was derived after the name of a well-known ruling family of the Bundelas of seventeenth century, A.D., the political boundaries of the region have also undergone changes from time to time. Yet the geographical boundaries and the climate of the region, have remained unchanged till this date. The geographical boundaries of the region are well defined by the River Yamuna in the north and River Narmada in South; the River Chambal in the West and the River Tons in the East. The

dialect Bundelkhandi, a derivative of Hindi, is spoken throughout the region. The folk-lore of the region, drawn mostly from the old bardic tradition, are full of glamour and glory of the people of the region. Hence, the name Bundelkhand here is used as the most convenient synonym for the region to trace its early historical and cultural growth.

The early history of Bundelkhand, as gleaned through the Vedic and Pauranic literature presents a very hazy and chequered account. The sacred literature contained in Brahmanas, Upanishads, Sutras and Puranas does mention the existence of the Vasas or Vatsa country with Kaushambi as its capital. The term 'Kausambiya', which occurs in the Satapatha Brahmana (xii, 2.2.13.) probably represents the ancient town of Kaushambi.

It is not difficult to believe that the Aryans, who had efficiently developed the art of navigation, made initially the eastern part of Bundelkhand as their stronghold for apparent political and economic reasons. And if the presence of early defences, closely resembling the Harappan citadel as brought out by the excavations at Kaushambi, have anything to do with its Pre-Aryan occupation, then the Aryans must have captured it from the Harappans who probably came here as fugitives of the Indus Valley after their early defeat at the hands of Aryans. Whatever may be the case, it is almost certain that the Kingdom of Kaushambi was in a flourishing state in the beginning of the 1st millennium B.C. According to the statement of the Puranas, the Pururava king Nichakshu, fifth in descent from Parikshita and the grandson of Arjuna, the hero of Mahabharata, had to transfer his capital from Hastinapura to Kaushambi, when the former was devastated by the floods in Ganges. It obviously shows that the prosperity of Kausambi owing to its unique geographical situation must have attracted the attention of the Pururava king. The traces of this great disaster caused by the extraordinary floods have also been noted from the archaeological excavation at Hastinapura.

According to the traditional accounts of the Puranas, Yadu governed the country watered by the rivers Chambal (Charmanvati), Betwa, (Vetravati) and Ken (Suktimati), which would roughly

include the modern Banda, Hamirpur and Jhansi districts of Bundelkhand.

The descendants of Yadu later divided themselves into two branches. The Yadava branch occupied the northern portion of Yadu's territory which centred around the River Chambal (Charmanvati). The Haihayas seem to have retained the areas around Banda, Hamirpur and Jhansi districts of Bundelkhand as well as some parts of eastern Malwa. One of their kings Sahanja founded the city of Sahanjani. Sahanjani is no doubt the Sahajati of the Buddhist Chronicles which has been identified with Bhita near Kaushambi.

The early Buddhist and Jain literature mentions both the Cheti or Chedi and Vamsa or Vatsa countries amongst the sixteen Great kingdom of the northern India. The Cheti or Chedi kingdom has been mentioned in the Jatakas as Chetarattha or Chetiya-rattha whose capital was Sotthivati-nagara. According to Prof. D.R. Bhandarkar "Cheta or Chetiya is the same as the Sanskrit Chaidya or Chedi, which occurs in the Rigveda and corresponds roughly to the modern Bundelkhand (Carmichael lectures, 1918).

Pargiter defines the boundaries of the Chedi kingdom along the south bank of the Jamuna, from the Chambal on the North-west as far as Karwee on the South-east (*JASB*, 1895, p. 253). Most probably Jamuna formed the natural boundary between the two kingdoms viz., Chedi in the south-west and Vatsa on the North-east in Bundelkhand. Sahajati (modern Bhita), which stood on the right bank of the river Jamuna, was a town in the Chedi kingdom.

There is a mention of two more tribes mentioned side by side the Chedi kingdom. The one is the Dasarnas who dwelt on the river Dasarna (modern Dhasan) and the other Pulindas who appear to have lived south of Dasarna, the king of Dasarna, whose kingdom comprised of the parts of modern Hamirpur and Saugar districts, had two daughters, one of whom was married to Virabahu, the king of Chedi kingdom and the other to Bhima, the king of Vidarbha. The latter's daughter Damayanti married the famous king Nala. The Pulindas are invariably shown along the banks of Narmada and the Vindhyan region. Ray Chaudhuri identifies their capital Pulindanagara with Rupnath in

Jabbalpur district, where one of the Minor Rock Edicts of Asoka has been found (*PHAI*, p. 513).

The Chedi kingdom comprised of several important towns like Sotthivati or Suktimati, (Modern Banda), Sahajati (Modern Bhita) and Bhaddavatika. Sahajati was an important military and commercial town which stood on the right bank of the River Jamuna. It was a flourishing centre of Buddhism. The great Buddhist Theras like Mahachunda and Gavampati dwelt there and preached their sermons. Bhaddavatika was another market-town. Once Buddha, while touring the Chedi country, went there and was informed by the cow-herds not to proceed towards Ambatittha, a place near Bhaddavatika, which was the dwelling place of a venomous Naga. On hearing this news, Sagata Thera went to the place and subdued the Naga and later joined the Buddha at Bhaddavatika. Thence they marched on to Kaushambi, the capital of the Vatsa kingdom.

It is likely that the Ambatittha might have been the ancient name of Pabhosa, a place of great historical antiquity lying three miles to the north-west of Kausambi. Hiuen Tsang who visited the place describes thus, "To the south-west of the city, 8 or 9 trili (about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles), is a stone dwelling of a venomous Naga. Having subdued this dragon, Tathagata left here his shadow, but, though this is a tradition of the people there is no vestige of the shadow visible". The tradition is further confirmed by the inscriptions found in the rock cut cave at Pabhosa which mention that it was dedicated to Naga Kalasa and other deities.

Later on, the kingdom of Chedis seems to have been annexed by Udayana, the king of Vatsa whose boundaries expanded as far as the forests of the river Narmada where he was trapped and captured by the people of Pradyota, the king of Avanti. The later history of the Bundelkhand region is again wrapped into darkness and the curtain rises only with the advent of the Maurya dynasty.

The present work entitled, 'Cultural History of Bundelkhand from 3rd c A.D. to B.C. 650' opens with an "Introduction" to the pre-history and proto-history of the region. The next Chapter, "Historical Background" presents a brief account of the history of the region from the Asokan era to the end of the reign period of

Harshavardhana. Very little work has been done on the early history of the Bundelkhand region. An attempt has been made here to give a brief sketch of the early history of Bundelkhand, based on the literary as well as archaeological sources known so far. The early social, economic and religious history of the reign is written based on early inscriptions, coins, literary evidences as well as the excavated archaeological material from the region. The dress and ornaments worn by the people during different periods are gleaned through the sculptures and terracotta figurines which reflect the traits and traditions of early times. The early art and architecture of Bundelkhand has been dealt at length by citing examples from different sites and by explaining the socio-economic causes for their spontaneous growth. The interchange of ideas, concepts and forms of art with those of the other regions, which added extra flesh and blood to the growth and development of the art of Bundelkhand, have also been critically analysed. It also contains illustrations of important monuments, sculptures and other art forms to substantiate the views held by the author. The present treatise is thus, the first concerted effort to bring to lime-light the early cultural history of Bundelkhand in its proper form and perspective.

A portion of the present work was completed when the author was working under Prof. K. de B. Codrington for his Ph. D. thesis in the Institute of Archaeology, London. However, the work had to be discontinued due to unavoidable reasons. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the work has now been completed and presented before the scholars to take up further studies on the subject. The author will ever remain indebted to Prof. Codrington for his worthy guidance and help at that time. The kind cooperation and help received from the various scholars and their writings must be duly acknowledged, as it would not have been possible to complete this work in the absence of the same. The authorities and staff of the Archaeological Survey of India, National Museum, New Delhi, Indian Museum, Calcutta, State Museum, Lucknow, The Allahabad Museum, and others have been kind enough to supply the photographs to be used in this book and the author is exceedingly grateful to them for their generous help. The author is equally indebted to his colleagues *viz.*, Dr. D.N. Varma,

Keeper and Sri M. Basava Rao, Dy. Keeper in the Salar Jung Museum for their assistance in completing this work. The author will be falling in his duty if he does not express his grateful thanks to Dr. G.N. Pant, Keeper in National Museum, New Delhi for his valuable suggestions and help which he so kindly offered at the final stage of printing of this book.

M.L. NIGAM

List of Plates

- Plate 1.* Torana of the Eastern Gateway of the Bharhut Stupa, 1st c B.C.
- Plate 2.* Pilar half-medallion showing a horse accompanied by a man and woman, Bharhut, 2nd-1st c B.C.
- Plate 3.* Chulakoka Yakshi, Bharhut, 2nd-1st c B.C.
- Plate 4.* Sudarsana Yakshi, Bharhut, 2nd-1st c B.C.
- Plate 5.* Worship of Stupa, Bharhut, 2nd-1st c B.C.
- Plate 6.* Cross-bar medallion bearing a full blown lotus of Bharhut Stupa, 2nd-1st c B.C.
- Plate 7.* Seated Buddha, Mankuwar, 5th c A.D.
- Plate 8.* General view of Gupta Temple, Sanchi, 5th c A.D.
- Plate 9.* General view of the Temple, Tigwa, 5th c A.D.
- Plate 10.* General view of the Parvati Temple, Nachna.
- Plate 11.* Ekamukha Sivalinga, Gupta, 5th c A.D., Nachana Kuthara, M.P.
- Plate 12.* Gupta Temple view from South, Deogarh.
- Plate 13.* Doorway of Gupta Temple, Deogarh.
- Plate 14.* Panch-mukha Linga of Siva, Bhita, 2nd c B.C.
- Plate 15.* Four-faced Yaksha, Bhita, 2nd-1st c B.C.
- Plate 16.* Four-faced Yaksha, Bhita, 2nd-1st c B.C.
- Plate 17.* Darpana Yakshini, Kausambi, 3rd c A.D.
- Plate 18.* Siva-Parvati, Kosam, 217 A.D.
- Plate 19.* Close-up view of Varha, Udaigiri Cave No. 6. First quarter of 5th c A.D.
- Plate 20.* Close-up view of the Varha, Eran, 6th c A.D.
- Plate 21.* Close-up view of Dwarpal, Cave No. 6, Udaigiri. First quarter of 5th c A.D.

- Plate 22.* Close-up view of Dwarpal, Cave No. 6, Udaigiri. First quarter of 5th c A.D.
- Plate 23.* Standing Vishnu, Bhita, 3rd-4th c A.D.
- Plate 24.* Close-up view of Vishnu, Cave No. 6, Udaigiri. First quarter of 5th c A.D.
- Plate 25.* Close-up view of Vishnu, Cave No. 6, Udaigiri. First quarter of 5th c A.D.
- Plate 26.* Close-up view of Vishnu image, Eran, 5th c A.D.
- Plate 27.* Bust of Nataraja, Gupta, 5th c A.D., Nachana Kuthara, M.P.
- Plate 28.* Bust of a male figure, Bhumara, 5th c A.D.
- Plate 29.* Carved stone slab, Bhumara, 5th c A.D.
- Plate 30.* The fight between Jarasandha and Bhima, Garhwa, 5th c A.D.
- Plate 31.* Lintel showing Surya riding a chariot, Garhwa, 5th c A.D.
- Plate 32.* Lintel showing a procession, Garhwa, 5th c A.D.
- Plate 33.* Lintel with Visvarupa Vishnu, Garhwa, 5th c A.D.
- Plate 34.* Lintel with Chandra and Rohini in a big crescent, Garhwa, 5th c A.D.
- Plate 35.* Lintel showing dance scenes, Gupta, early 6th c A.D., Deogarh.
- Plate 36.* Chaturmukha Linga, Kosam, 5th c A.D.
- Plate 37.* Nataraja, Gupta, 5th c A.D., Tumam, M.P.
- Plate 38.* Nara Narayana, Deogarh. Early 6th c A.D.
- Plate 39.* Shersah Panel, Deogarh. Early 6th c A.D.
- Plate 40.* Gajendra Moksha, Dasawantra Temple, Deogarh Early 6th c. A.D.
- Plate 41.* Devaki handing over child Krishna to Vasudeva, Deogarh. Early 6th c. A.D.
- Plate 42.* Rama redeeming Ahilya, Deogarh. Early 6th c A.D.
- Plate 43.* Lakshmana disfiguring Surpanakha, Deogarh. Early 6th c A.D.
- Plate 44.* Kubera, Pabhosa, 7th c A.D.
- Plate 45.* Jain Tirthankara, Vidisha, 4th c A.D.
- Plate 46.* Jain Tirthankara, Vidisha, 4th c A.D.

List of Plates

xiii

Plate 47. Jain Tirthankara, Vidisha, 4th c A.D.

Plate 48. Terracotta toy-cart (Mṛchchhakatika), Kaushambi, 1st c B.C.

Plate 49. Terracotta toy-cart (Mṛchchhakatika), Kausambi, 1st. c B.C.

Plate 50. Terracotta seals, Bhita, 1st-2nd c A.D.

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	v
<i>List of Plates</i>	xi
<i>CHAPTER 1</i>	
Introduction	1
<i>CHAPTER 2</i>	
Historical Background	25
<i>CHAPTER 3</i>	
Social Conditions	58
<i>CHAPTER 4</i>	
Economic Conditions	76
<i>CHAPTER 5</i>	
Religious Conditions	85
<i>CHAPTER 6</i>	
Art	120
<i>Bibliography</i>	185
<i>Index</i>	198

Contents

1	Introduction
2	Chapter 1
3	Chapter 2
4	Chapter 3
5	Chapter 4
6	Chapter 5
7	Chapter 6
8	Chapter 7
9	Chapter 8
10	Chapter 9
11	Chapter 10
12	Chapter 11
13	Chapter 12
14	Chapter 13
15	Chapter 14
16	Chapter 15
17	Chapter 16
18	Chapter 17
19	Chapter 18
20	Chapter 19
21	Chapter 20
22	Chapter 21
23	Chapter 22
24	Chapter 23
25	Chapter 24
26	Chapter 25
27	Chapter 26
28	Chapter 27
29	Chapter 28
30	Chapter 29
31	Chapter 30
32	Chapter 31
33	Chapter 32
34	Chapter 33
35	Chapter 34
36	Chapter 35
37	Chapter 36
38	Chapter 37
39	Chapter 38
40	Chapter 39
41	Chapter 40
42	Chapter 41
43	Chapter 42
44	Chapter 43
45	Chapter 44
46	Chapter 45
47	Chapter 46
48	Chapter 47
49	Chapter 48
50	Chapter 49
51	Chapter 50
52	Chapter 51
53	Chapter 52
54	Chapter 53
55	Chapter 54
56	Chapter 55
57	Chapter 56
58	Chapter 57
59	Chapter 58
60	Chapter 59
61	Chapter 60
62	Chapter 61
63	Chapter 62
64	Chapter 63
65	Chapter 64
66	Chapter 65
67	Chapter 66
68	Chapter 67
69	Chapter 68
70	Chapter 69
71	Chapter 70
72	Chapter 71
73	Chapter 72
74	Chapter 73
75	Chapter 74
76	Chapter 75
77	Chapter 76
78	Chapter 77
79	Chapter 78
80	Chapter 79
81	Chapter 80
82	Chapter 81
83	Chapter 82
84	Chapter 83
85	Chapter 84
86	Chapter 85
87	Chapter 86
88	Chapter 87
89	Chapter 88
90	Chapter 89
91	Chapter 90
92	Chapter 91
93	Chapter 92
94	Chapter 93
95	Chapter 94
96	Chapter 95
97	Chapter 96
98	Chapter 97
99	Chapter 98
100	Chapter 99
101	Chapter 100

1

INTRODUCTION

The history and culture of a country or region are, to a great extent, controlled by their geographical features. As Febvre remarks, "It is the whole life of man, not only their political life, it is the whole of their institutions, and, above all, but not exclusively, their economic organization which are in close relations with the environment"¹. It is, therefore, essential that the history of any particular place or period must be built upon the physical factors which play an immense part in its final making. Hence, the importance of geography and its relation with history can, in no way, be minimized. "Geography" as Codrington would put it, "is not a mere record of discoveries. It is also the expression of ideas, and must strive towards their synthesis with the political facts, in a single critical picture"². One has always to be extremely cautious in examining this close and constant relationship between man and his environment.

Although the study of environment since Darwin is of great importance, its relevance on man is extremely amplified. Man is not a mechanical product of his environment. He takes the initiative and modifies it according to his own needs. "He exploits nature to more and more purpose, and in exploiting it, or in order to exploit it, he interferes with it. He makes it serve his ends"³. Man's environment, therefore, changes. From this point of view, climate is obviously of great importance as it is known that no climatic conditions have changed throughout times.

The sub-continent of India, with a multitude of distinctive peoples and cultures, which have infiltrated into her borders from time to time since remote antiquity, exhibits a strange sense of unity

amidst diversity. "It is only to be expected that so vast an area, bordered by incomparably the most massive mountains in the world, intersected by rivers of the first rank, should contain very considerably physical diversity"⁴. These varying physical and cultural factors, apparent in the Indian scene, have always operated as great obstacles to her political unification. On the other hand, the differing factors of climate, soil and people have given rise to clear regional divisions with their frontiers marked by natural barriers. It has been rightly remarked that "owing to their diverse historical reasons, each of these regions asserted its independent personality with the growth of population, rise of local dialects and vernacular languages"⁵. It is beyond doubt that these centrifugal forces, which received encouragement in the absence of any central power, have proved detrimental to the cause of National Unity. But it must be remembered that these periods of decay represent very vital constructive epochs of regional art and culture. Their importance, when Indian history lacks unity as an organic whole built up from age to age by a sole sovereign authority, can very well be imagined. In the words of R.K. Mookerji, "The facts of local history unearthed by specialized work on the spot, and study at its various sources, will give flesh and blood, colour and form to the dry bones, the dead skeleton of a mean and meagre general history"⁶.

Bundelkhand, owing to its unique geographical position between the northern and southern parts of India, its hilly surroundings and its natural resources, has attracted kings and sages alike through all the ages. It was used as a gateway between the North and South by the invading armies of the kings, merchants, caravan of traders and religious missionaries in their early attempts of success from one part to the other. This strange natural phenomenon, though catastrophic to some extent, made people sturdy, self-sufficient and God-fearing. This is why we find Bundelkhand blessed with huge cultural remains well marked in quality as well as variety. This mountainous region with its impressive topography, more or less poor soil, inclement climate is difficult to access and has an individuality of its own.

The boundaries of the Bundelkhand region have undergone changes from time to time and dynasty to dynasty⁷. At one place,

they, have been summarized as follows, "Bundelkhand may be defined as the tract lying between the river Jamuna on the north; the Chambal on the north-west; the Jabalpur and Sagar Divisions of the Central provinces on the south and east. It is watered by the rivers Jamuna, Chambal, Betwa, Dhasan and Ken, and comprises the modern Districts of Hamirpur, Jalaun, Jhansi, Lalitpur and Banda; the treaty States of Orchha or Tehri, Datia and Samthar, and the following States held under *sanads* and grants from the British Government, and bound by deeds of allegiance, viz., Ajaigarh, Alipura, the Ashtgarhi or Hashtbhaya Jagirs of Dhurwahi, Tori Fathpur, Bijna and Pahari Banka; Baronda, Bawani or Baoni, Beri, Bihat, Bijawar, Charkhari; the Chaubiyana Kalinjara Jagirs of Bhaisaunda, Kamta, Rajola, Nayagaon, Paldeo, Pahra and Taraon; Chhatarpur, Gohrauli, Gourihar, Jasu, Jigni, Khaniya Dhana, Lughasi, Naigaon Ribahi, Panna and Sarila"⁸. After the Indian independence, the districts of Banda, Hamirpur, Jhansi, Lalitpur and Jalaun only are known as Bundelkhand and the rest of the region has been merged with Madhya Pradesh.

The topography of Bundelkhand presents a contrast of plains and hills and the rivers and woods. Indeed the marked beauty of the area is due to the richness of this variation. The area is divided into two parts, the southern consisting of hills divided into ranges and the north sloping down to the plains south of Yamuna. The tract is apparently a level plain gradually widening from the south to north towards Yamuna. In the south it is approached by hills which have been classified geologically into three ranges viz., the Vindhyachala to the North-east, the Panna range to the South and the Bandair range to the South-west. The Vindhyachala range, which in no place exceeds 2,000 feet in height above sea-level, commences near Sihonda on the river Sindh, proceeding South-west to Narwar, thence South-east, and thence North-east to Ajaigarh and Kalinjara and further east to Bargadh where it crosses the limits of Bundelkhand. Its lower parts are formed of granite which is overlaid by sandstone and sometimes by trap of volcanic origin. The Panna range rises to the south of the plateau of the Vindhyachala hills. The primary rock is overlaid by thick bed of sandstone which is itself in

some places covered by the volcanic trap. The third or Bandair range which rises in the South-west of the Panna range, is generally formed of sandstone. Besides, the tortuous gorge of white marble rocks near Jabalpur through which the Narmada winds is a beauty spot widely known to the tourists.

As Spate has rightly described the region, "Bundelkhand is recognizable by a mass of rounded hummocky hills, with almost a 'roches moutonnees' effect, typical tropical exfoliation weathering in the reddish Bundelkhand—Gneiss, cut across by innumerable-white quartzite dykes, in all sizes from veins of a few inches to massive walls. The frequent constriction of drainage by the dykes favours a multiplicity of small half natural, half artificial tanks and so enables agriculture to be carried on with some security in a region of variable rainfall around 45 inches"⁹.

Numerous streams flow from these ranges northwards, to the Yamuna. As Spate has remarked, "The river system of this area is an interesting one. The river Ken and river Betwa rise within 20 miles of the river Narmada and appear as consequents on the Mesozoic surface, superimposed on the scarps"¹⁰. The river Sindh which touches on Bundelkhand at its South-west corner, turns North-east to meet Yamuna. The Betwa with its tributaries, Dhasan and Birma, pass through many important cities like Sanchi, Gwalior, etc. The Ken is a great river which collects its water from its two main tributaries, the Urmal and Chandrawal. Still further eastward, there are two small rivers, the Bagain and the Paisuni, which also flow northward. The Tons, rising in the South-eastern part of Bundelkhand, flows in a North-easterly direction and ultimately passes into Bundelkhand. The southern parts of the Jabalpur District are drained by the Narmada and its two tributaries viz., the Hiran and Gaur.

There are dense forests in the west, south and south-eastern parts of Bundelkhand, while the northern parts are covered by areas of scrub. In other words the northern parts of the Bundelkhand consist of scrub country due to the decline in rainfall, though surrounding certain ancient centres of habitation, the ancient forests had been destroyed by man and have been replaced by the secondary scrub. Bamboos of good quality are exported from Ajaigarh and

Kalinjara. Tendu and mahua are good trees in the Banda and Jhansi districts. There are small teak forests also in the Jhansi district. The fauna of the forests includes the tiger, bear, panther, leopard, wolf, hyena, antelope, deer, fox, jackal and monkey, etc.

Bundelkhand has got extensive mineral resources. The diamond mines of Panna are famous in India. Iron ore of good quality is found in the Banda and Jhansi districts. Traces of copper also have been noticed in the latter District. Limestone and stone for building purposes are exported to the other parts of the country. A fine variety of sand for making glass is available in the Banda District. Similarly, other minerals like Manganese and Bauxite etc., are found near Jabalpur.

The climate of the above region is hot and the rains are moderate. The average January temperature remains between 60° C to 70° C and average July temperature remains between 80° to 90° C. The climate of the year is divided into three main seasons viz., winter (November to February), Summer (March to May) and the Rains (June to September). Agriculture, the main industry of the people, largely depends upon the monsoon rains which give a variable rainfall, around 45 inches, although lakes and artificial reservoirs also have been constructed for irrigation purposes. The most fertile soil of Bundelkhand is known as Regur or Mar, medium light black in colour. Wheat, barley, gram, mustard, rice maize, *jawar*, *bajra*, *sesamum*, cotton and pulses are the main crops which are harvested twice in the year in autumn (*kharif*) and spring (*rabi*). The means and methods of cultivation are primitive requiring much labour with little returns. Proper soil preparation has to give place to buried tillage, and single crops to mixtures like gram and wheat, or gram and linseed, or even gram, linseed and wheat in the *rabi*, and *sesamum* and *arhar*, or *jawar* and *arhar*, in the *kharif*. In the hope of striking a lucky combination of a large sown area and a favourable season more land is farmed than can be properly controlled with the man and bullock power available.¹¹ After Independence, the farmers are adopting modern means of agriculture also. High embankments across rivers; such as the Matatila in Jhansi District, Arjun

in Hamirpur District and Rangawan in Banda District have been constructed to facilitate irrigation in the region.

Besides agriculture, cattle grazing is also quite popular. The vegetation is largely open scrub and bush. The bulk of population resides in the rural areas, the villages are small, stoutly built often of stone, outer walls are blind and doorways massive and low relics of the old insecurity, visibly attested also by the hill top holds which are easily the most striking features of the landscape.¹²

PREHISTORY

The earliest settlement of man in Bundelkhand is indefinite. The sands and gravels of the great alluvial plain of the Narmada in the South-west corner of the Jabalpur District fall into two divisions; one, the upper one is considered to be post-Pleistocene in age and is practically free from mammalian remains but the lower one which contains the relics of existing and extinct animals, such as *Elephas*, *Bos*, *Equus*, *Trionyx*, Ruminants and Hippopotamus is ascribed to the Pleistocene period. A.C. Logan, in view of similar discoveries of extinct species made in the Banda District by Cockburn, considers gravels of the Yamuna to be of almost similar age. According to him the "evidence of human existence during the formation of these deposits is not plentiful, but is, nevertheless, decisive"¹³.

Chert and quartzite implements were also found in these deposits lying associated with the archaic fauna. There are a few such quartzite specimens from Bundelkhand in the collection of Indian Museum, Calcutta. Mitra takes these rare implements to betray a Chellean phase of culture. According to him, "The dirty white quartzite from Indargarh, the quartzite from Bundelkhand (Nos. 167 and 145 of the Indian Museum) and several specimens from Cuddapah can be called the handiwork of the Indian "Chelleans"¹⁴. On the basis of the above statement we can believe Logan to be correct when he considers the quartzite-users as the most ancient prehistoric men of India. In his own words, "The men of the Quartzite and most ancient period living along the Narmada made implements either of quartzite or more commonly of Vindhyan

sandstone"¹⁵. These crude stone tools, which were not yet developed into distinct types, might have served the purpose of cutting wood and piercing animals by the quartzite men, who were, of course, hunters living practically on flesh and fruits.

The prehistoric tools from various sites in the Banda,¹⁶ Hamirpur, Jhansi¹⁷, Sagar¹⁸, Damoh, Panna¹⁹ and Jabalpur²⁰ Districts of Bundelkhand include a huge collection of the stone tools of the Series I. In the year 1951 K.N. Puri discovered a paleolithic site at Deogarh in Jhansi District in the basin of the Betwa river, a tributary of the Yamuna.²¹ Again, in the year 1956-57, the paleolithic tools of Series I and II were noted in the same vicinity. Owing to its central position in the area between the river Narmada and the Sighauli basins, which have revealed the existence of tools characteristic of both north and south Indian Stone Age industries²², it is possible to subscribe to the views of Krishnaswamy who regards this spot as a meeting ground of Sohan and Madras industries.

But recent discoveries in Bundelkhand, however, suggest a note of warning that the problem of the wide diffusion and impact of the two early north and south Stone Age cultures should be reviewed²³. The bifacial tools of the type of the Madras handaxe culture along with large rounded quartzite pebbles have been found at Bariarpur on the river Ken. As it has been noted, there does not exist any typological relationship between these handaxes made from quartzite pebbles and those of the early Sohan industry. On the other hand, the stages of fabrication of these tools evidently hint at their gradual evolution from the unspecialized core to the bifacial handaxe.

In the year 1958 about fifteen new Stone Age sites partly in Sagar and partly in Damoh Districts within the drainage system of the Yamuna, were explored. The collection of tools comprise of handaxes, cleavers, medium-sized bifacial choppers and flakes. To summarize the views of the author, "The collection thus comprises both rolled tools showing crude workmanship and less-worn ones of better workmanship. Typologically, the former set of tools belongs to the Abbevillean in early Acheulian stages and the latter shows the mid-Acheulian technique"²⁴.

The other prolific Stone Age industry of Bundelkhand belongs to the Middle Stone Age group,²⁵ falling typologically and the microlithic industries of the Early and Late Stone Age group, falling typologically and stratigraphically between the handaxe and the microlithic industries of the Early and Late Stone Ages respectively. However, the Stone Age industries of this period have been described under different nomenclatures.²⁶ A collection of such implements worked in chert, jasper and allied siliceous material was made by R.V. Joshi during his explorations of the Sagar and Damoh areas. The flakes and short blade flakes with obtuse-angled plain striking platform and unworked under surfaces have been found in a large quantity. The other type, either with longitudinal or converging scars on the surface, do not bear faceted striking platforms owing to their technique of being removed from partially or fully prepared cores. The blades of the backed blade type, are generally thicker than those of the microlithic type. While describing a similar flake blade scraper assemblage from the village Kohari on the Baghain, a tributary of Ken, he remarks, "This river has preserved the Middle Stone Age flakes scraper industry lain in situ in its lower gravels and thus gives a convenient type-section for that industry by its stratigraphic context, richness and variety"²⁷. Another expedition led by Allchin and others in the year 1957-58 in Bundelkhand and adjoining areas of the Deccan has brought more fruitful discoveries to light. Collections of Stone tools were made at Bheraghat on the river Narmada, near Jabalpur and Pandav Falls as well as in the village Rehuntiya of the Banda District in the alluvial plains of the Ganga-Yamuna *doab*. The distinct types of tools acquired were flakes, blades, scrapers, handaxes and cores, etc., made of fine quartzites. The handaxes occur both at the Bheraghat as well as Pandav Falls sites in Bundelkhand, which according to the authors, 'strengthen the case of handaxes of Bheraghat being contemporary with the Middle Stone Age tools, rather than derived from earlier deposits'²⁸. There are many technological and typological factors of the Bundelkhand Middle Stone Age tools common to the other Indian Stone Age industries of the same period. This common similarity may be treated as a clue to the relative dating and wide distribution of these industries in an extensive area covering the whole peninsular

India including Gujarat and Rajasthan on the west and Orissa on the east.²⁹ A comparative study of the whole material has, however, led Khatri to believe that "the prehistoric people responsible for Series II culture were different from those manufacturing handaxes and cleavers of advanced Acheulian types though both were contemporary with each other. Series II culture is independent from the Handaxe Culture in its origin and represents a new wave"³⁰. But again, the presence of handaxes along with the Series II tools both at Bheraghat and Pandav Falls makes it difficult to maintain this conclusion. In this case it may safely be presumed that the men of the above two sites probably knew and followed both the traditions in manufacturing their tools.

Handaxes also occur in Series II manufacturing sites on the river Shivna in Malwa. It may rightly be suggested that the handaxe-cleaver complex found in these sites continued a long way.

The tools invariably show either the technique of striking a flake from the carefully prepared discoidal core or striking more or less parallel-sided blade flakes from one or more sides of a suitable piece of raw material. In both the types, the striking platform is sometimes faceted but more commonly plain. Regarding the blade flake technique Allchin observes. "It is worth pointing out once more that the blade flake technique of the Middle Stone Age is quite distinct from the blade technique of the Late Stone Age. Not only are the size and proportions of the blade flakes and blades entirely different, but the size of the bulbs of percussions and the depth of the flake scars are much greater in the former case than the latter, indicating a completely different method of applying the blow"³¹. It will be difficult to point out any single industry of the Middle Stone Age in or outside India to be identical in all respects with those of the Bundelkhand but their certain common elements can easily be traced in the Levallois—Mousterian industries of Europe and the East Griqualand industry of Africa. The Middle Stone Age man was still leading an unsettled life, dwelling on the banks of rivers, getting his food by hunting animals and collecting fruits and roots from the surrounding jungles. He, however, produced more suitable stones to satisfy his daily needs.

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The recent discoveries have brought forth sufficient material to differentiate the earlier geometric microlithic tools from the Neolithic or Polished Stone implements and fine Chalcolithic blades. A large collection of microlithic implements, viz., parallel-side blades, pen-knife blades, borers, trapazes, scrapers and arrow-heads as well as the fluted cores in quartz, agate, chalcedony, etc., was made at Bariyari, fourteen miles to the east of Kausambi and Siddhapur in the Karwi Sub-division of the Banda District.³² Similar stones of the Microlithic period worked on agate, chalcedony and jasper have also been acquired from the various sites in Jabalpur³³ and Sagar³⁴ Districts. The microlithic industry discovered in the Singrauli basin exhibit a close link with the Microlithic tools of the Bundelkhand. As these tools of the Singrauli basin in Mirzapur District are devoid of any associated pottery, they are deemed to carry the degenerated upper Paleolithic blade tradition and are ascribed to an early Mesolithic Period.³⁵ But the microlithic industry of Bundelkhand area seems to have continued for a fairly long period as we find microliths occurring in the lowermost periods of Eran³⁶ and Tripuri³⁷, along with copper and pottery.

The polished Stone axes of the Neolithic age with typical pointed butt are largely found all over Bundelkhand. Typologically, they are quite indistinguishable from the types found at Bellary and Raichur. Their association with pottery and metallic objects suggest a wide expansion of this culture into the main riverine tracts whose scrubs, owing to the discovery of fire and metals, must have been cleared and converted into agriculturable fields. The Neolithic people, unlike their predecessors, led a settled life by cultivating fields and producing food instead of collecting it. They built houses and domesticated cattle. The polished tanged hoe or adze, with angular or sloping shoulders and single chamfered edge, more suitable for agricultural society, have been found within the fortification of Kausambi and in the Banda District. They probably came later than the first polished axes and may be ascribed to, as Mortimer Wheeler suggests, to the latter half of the first millenium B.C.³⁸

PROTOHISTORIC CULTURE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CITIES

The striking revolutionary period of the late Neolithic man, when he switched over from food-gathering to the food-producing stage due to invention of metal and developed agricultural implements, must have led to the surplus production. It required a permanent and safe storage of agricultural produce, resulting in the collective living and development of compact village society. The developed means of transport through the land and water gave further impetus to trade and industry suiting to the rudimentary needs of the pastoral society, which led to the urbanisation and development of cities. The constant feeling of insecurity from the invading tribes gave rise to the idea of fortification with high walls around the city.

KAUSHAMBI

The archaeological excavations at Kaushambi have thrown much valuable light on the early fortification of the city. The S.P.I. 3, where the earliest structure has been noticed, reveals 'a rampart of mud with sloping sides rivetted with a burnt brick wall, battered back to about 30° to 40°. . . reinforced by bastions towers, square in plan, all elements recalling that of the Harappan citadel.'³⁹ The vast distance in time and space has given rise to a question, whether across the many intervening centuries a significant structural tradition had been preserved is more than doubtful.⁴⁰ But it is interesting to note that the painted Grey Ware, in a slight modified form, a common denominator of the Aryan culture, occurs in two structural periods after the original construction of the defences. Taking into consideration the red ware pottery, dish-on-stand type, which is the style of the fortifications and more particularly the remains of the recently excavated Harappan culture at Alamgirapura⁴¹ District Meerut, U.P., a site lying not very far from Kaushambi, one cannot overrule the possibility of such an early structure which might have been built by the late Harappan fugitives to seek protection against the Aryans.

The ancient traditional accounts vary on the origin of the city of Kaushambi.⁴² Ray Chaudhary summarizes the problem by stating,

“Epic traditions attribute the foundation of this famous city (Kaushambi) to a Chedi prince and the origin of the Vatsas is traced to a King of Kasi”⁴³. The story that Kaushambi was occupied by Nichakshu, fifth in descent from Parikshit, after the denunciation of Hastinapur by the Ganges, in the Matsya Purana, seems to get some support from the archaeological excavations at Hastinapur. The signs of this devastation, which occurred sometimes during the Period II of the five occupational periods revealed at Hastinapur, were noticed on the mound in the form of an erosional scar.⁴⁴ According to B.B. Lal, the excavator of the site, the Period II is marked by the occurrence of Painted Grey Ware which began in *circa* 1100 B.C. The Period II which witnessed the introduction of N.B.P. and copper and silver coins, might have started early in the sixth century B.C. It is, therefore, pertinent to accept the date of Nichakshu’s occupation of Kaushambi somewhere between *circa* 1100 B.C. to *circa* 600 B.C. But it is more than likely that Kaushambi must have existed as an important town earlier than this royal occupation and this is why Nichakshu chose it to be the seat of his royal power.

Out of the 25 occupational Periods brought to light at Kaushambi, ranging from the post-Harappan culture to the 6th C.A.B. SP II. 5 to S.P. II. 8 exhibit the Aryan culture being associated with the slightly modified form of Painted Grey Ware and the Black-and-Red Ware descending right from the S.P.I. The structural remains, bearing the evidence of *syenachiti* and the *purusamedha* rites performed here, are in close conformity with the early Vedic literature.⁴⁵ Here we also notice the old Harappan system of the defences being improved by the construction of a moat round the ramparts, a novel feature unknown to the Harappans.

The third habitation period from S.P. III. 9 to S.P. III. 16 is marked by the appearance of the N.B.P., the beginning of which, on the basis of Taxila excavations, is said to have taken place in *circa* 600 B.C.⁴⁶ This period has yielded a valuable collection of silver and copper punch-marked coins, uninscribed as well as the inscribed cast coins of the Mitra kings of Kaushambi. The evidence of arrow-heads, terracotta figurines and the inscribed seals is of much historical value.

S.P.IV.17 to S.P.IV.25, devoid of the N.B.P. Ware, have been dated back to the first six centuries of the Christian era. The coins of the Magha kings, who ruled Kaushambi and its surroundings in the 2nd century A.D. and the seal of the Huna leader Toramana throw new light on the history of Kaushambi.⁴⁷

It is with the eastward movement of the Aryans, the people of the so-called Painted Grey Ware Culture, that the focus of Indian culture shifts from the Indus basin to the Gangetic valley. It led to the growth of great rivers which served as means of communication for easy circulation of passage. Kaushambi and Sahajati (modern Bhita) which lay in the mid of the maritime route connecting east, west and the northern ends of India, caught the earliest wave of Aryan migration in the Ganga-Yamuna *doab*. But the southern Bundelkhand, where the Vindhyan range presents a southward barrier, still formed the part of primitive agricultural society. The absence of Painted Grey Ware and the presence of microliths associated with red painted sherds and followed by iron and N.B.P. at Eran and Tripuri in southern Bundelkhand, are sufficient proof to suggest that these parts were Aryanized at a fairly later stage when further routes up through the river Chambal and Ujjaini were discovered to cross the Vindhyan border.

During the Buddha's time (6th century B.C.) Kaushambi was one of the six great cities of India. In the *Mahaparinibbana Suttanta* of the *Digha Nikaya*, Anand requests Buddha to select one of the six great cities viz., Champa, Rajagaha, Savathi, Saketa, Kosambi and Banares for the Great Decease where distinguished believers in the *Tathagata* would pay due respect to his bodily remains. The stories of wealthy merchants of Kaushambi who patronized Buddhism by constructing monasteries for the monk are found in the old Pali canons. Out of the four famous *viharas* of Kaushambi viz., the Kakkutarama, the Ghositarama, the Pavarika Ambavana and the Badarikarama, where the Buddha stayed and delivered several discourses, the first three are attributed to the most eminent citizens of Kaushambi, named respectively Kakkuta, Ghosita and Pavarika. Udayana, the ruler of the Vatsa

kingdom, with Kaushambi as his capital, is a well-known romantic figure of the Sanskrit literature.

BHITA

Bhita, about 35 miles downstream from Kaushambi, the ancient Vichhi or Vichigrama and Sahajati or Sahajata of the sealings⁴⁸ and Buddhist chronicles,⁴⁹ was a famous Buddhist centre of the Chedi kingdom (modern Bundelkhand).

The ruins of Bhita or Bitabhayapattan, as mentioned in the *Viracharita*, a Jain chronicle, extend in a slightly curved line for about a mile and a half long in a direction from South, South-west to North, North-east, ending in the rocky islet of Sujan Deo on the Yamuna. Deoriya, a tiny village on the Yamuna, facing Sujan Deo, originally formed a part of the city of Bitabhayapattan. About half a mile still further to the east stands the village of Mankuwar where the well known inscribed image of the Buddha was discovered. The site, which is full of huge mounds, was first noticed by the railway contractors. The area was later on explored by Babu Siva Prasad, and Alexander Cunningham. Some meagre excavation work was also undertaken by Cunningham in the eastern part of the fort. The valuable discoveries made by Cunningham include several inscriptions mentioning the names of Bhikshu Budhavalā, Aryyantadi, the wife of the banker of Ugahaka, Bhikshu Budhivarma and Budhimitra. Besides inscriptions, there are fragments of N.B.P., ornamented *toranas*, railings and numerous stone seats or *asana pattas*. Cunningham, on the grounds of certain fragmentary sculptures belonging to the 2nd-1st century B.C. and brief inscriptions collected by Babu Siva Prasad on the site, concluded that the Buddhism was the prevailing religion at Bhita.⁵⁰ Although this is not supported by the inadequate excavations made during the early years of the 20th century, yet there is sufficient literary evidence to confirm this view. Yasa Kakandakaputta came here to meet the famous Buddhist scholar, Revata, who had arrived from Soreyya, to consult him regarding the Ten Points raised by the Vajjiputtakas.⁵¹ The great Buddhist *theras* like Mahachunda and Gavanpati are said to have stayed and preached there.⁵²

In the *Anguttara Nikaja*, Sahajati is mentioned as a Nigama of the Chetis.⁵³ This is also corroborated by the archaeological discovery of a seal-die at Bhita which in the characters of 4th or 3rd. century B.C. reads as *Sahijitiye Nigamasa*. It clearly shows that the township of Sahajata was flourishing as early as 4th century B.C.

D.R. Bhandarkar has proved that the term *nigam* in ancient literature, coins and inscriptions has been used to denote a body of townsmen, for the local administration of the city who were endowed with power to strike coinage.⁵⁴ It was not a 'merchantile guild', as formerly suggested by Buhler,⁵⁵ because we nowhere find mention of guilds minting any coin.

That Bhita was an important military centre at least as early as the time of the Mauryas, has been suggested by the archaeological excavations by John Marshall, who observes, "In the Mauryan period the buildings III and IV, which face each other on opposite sides of the road, probably did duty as guardhouses or were closely connected to in some other way with the defences, for their construction is much more massive than that of the private houses of the period."⁵⁶ But it is beyond doubt that the foundations of this city were laid much earlier than the Mauryan period, as the deposits beneath (the Mauryan level) extended down to 20 feet and more, before virgin soil was reached.⁵⁷ The discovery of the city wall built of bricks is another significant structure. The general plan of the houses consists of a central courtyard enclosed by a row of rooms on the four sides.

Sahajati was a famous river-station receiving merchants as far a distance as from Burma.⁵⁸ This literary evidence is further verified by the discovery of a particular variety of sealing which is considered by Marshall to have been used as token or passport.⁵⁹ It is highly probable that the traders plying from distant countries to Sahajati might have been provided with the passport by the civil authorities of Sahajati at their arrival to produce it for their valid entry into the city markets. Some of these sealings are inscribed with the names of rulers, such as Maharaja Gautamiputra Sivamagha and Raja Vashisthiputra Bhimasena. The mass of variable material punch-

marked, uninscribed cast, tribal and Kushan coins, terracotta figurines and religious and mercantile sealings ranging from the 4th or 3rd century B.C. to the Gupta period, is important to know something about the religion, economy and fashions of the people in the past, yet the picture presented by such an early and minor excavation remains incomplete and requires fresh scientific operations. It has rightly been remarked, "but the scrappy excavations carried out there half a century ago were incompetent even for their age, and only the occurrence of N.B.P. Ware hints at the antiquity of the place."⁶⁰

ERAN

Ancient Erakina of inscriptions and Erakanya of coins stand on the south bank of river Bina, a tributary of the Betwa in Madhya Pradesh.⁶¹ The site was explored by A. Cunningham in 1876-77. During his expedition he collected a number of ancient coins of the different types and ages from the site. They are the early punch-marked coins, the cast coins, the die-struck coins and the inscribed coins. As the varying weights and sizes of coins would suggest, they represent different denominations viz., *pana* and *Kakini* etc., prevalent at that time.

Out of the inscribed coins, the one bearing the legend *Dhama-spalsa* in early Brahmi character, is of immense value. The two coins bearing the ancient name of Eran as "Airakanya"—in early Brahmi characters, are important as the legend probably suggests the corporation-money of the town.

The antiquities of Eran are of double value viz., historical as well as artistic. The inscribed sculptures and architectural fragments belong to the periods of Samudragupta, Budhagupta and Huna Toramana. The monuments of Eran are primarily Vaishnavite in character. Although the original temple structures have fallen down, the existing ruins indicate the artistic supremacy of the place.

The past excavations at Eran have brought to light four occupational Periods, the lowest one being associated with the Chalcolithic remains, assignable to c. 2000 B.C. to 700 B.C.⁶² It is significant that Period I, characterized by the presence of microliths, black-and-red, thick grey

and black-on-red pottery, terracotta figurines, beads as well as a small piece of copper, bear no signs of Painted Grey Ware. The evidence of the pottery, similar to those found at post-Harappan sites like Lothal and Rangpur, shows that Eran, prior to the Aryan penetration, was influenced by the Harappan traditions which reached probably through Kathiawar and Western India.

Period II A

This Period was marked by the black-and-red ware, different in shape and fabric from the one noticed in the preceding Period, and by more use of iron. The Ware is thinner and unpainted. A few sherds, having affinity with the Chalcolithic painted black-on red, continued to occur in this Period, while the Chalcolithic ceramic wares were totally absent in the levels of this Period. One sherd of N.B.P. Ware was also noticed at the late level of the Period.

Period II B

This sub-Period was characterised by the gradual disappearance of the black-and red ware of the preceding sub-Period, and by the absence of red polished ware occurring in the succeeding Period. The pottery mostly consisted of plain red ware, the commonest type being bowls with incurved rims. A few sherds were painted in black over-red with simple horizontal bands.

Period III

This period was marked by the total disappearance of black-and-red ware and the occurrence of the red polished ware throughout the levels. The bulk of the pottery consists of the simple red ware, sometimes painted in black over red with horizontal lines.

The most significant find of the Period is a circular clay sealing depicting Gajalakshmi in the upper half. The goddess is standing with one hand resting at the thigh and the other raised. There is a *prabhavali* around her head. Two elephants, standing on either side with their trunks raised, are anointing the goddess (*Lakshmi abhiseka*). In the lower half of the sealing is a Brahmi inscription in two lines in the Gupta characters which reads *Airikine Gomika Visha(-ya)*

dhikara (masya). Four structural sub-phases were noted in this Period. The building material consisted of stone, burnt bricks and tiles. Some of the houses had covered burnt brick drains.

Period IV

Apart from the structural remains, massive stone fortification wall belonging to the late sub-phase of this Period was found. The finds of the Period included plenty of glass and lac bangles, miscellaneous terracotta, stone, iron and copper objects, a few fragments of shell bangles and the beads of glass, terracotta, jasper and carnelian. Although the occupation of the ancient mound at the site continues to this day, the sequence is practically closed with the construction of the stone fortification wall sometime in the eighteenth century A.D.

TRIPURI

The tiny village of Tewar is situated six miles to the west of Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. The actual site of ancient Tripuri is about half a mile to the south-east of the village and is known as Karanbel. Cunningham explored this area during the last quarter of the 19th century. While exploring he noticed several remains of architecture and sculptures, mainly belonging to the Kalachuri's regime. Besides the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain sculptures, he also noticed numerous old structural remains scattered around Karanbel. As all these architectural fragments belong to the 10th-11th centuries A.D. it is quite evident that the revival of ancient Tripuri took place during the Kalachuri period. It has further been confirmed by the discoveries of coins and inscriptional data. But the excavations conducted by the Sagar University at Tripuri have produced ample evidence to prove the much earlier habitation of the city of Tripuri.

Tripuri has yielded a microlithic culture, "Stratigraphically below the Mauryan stratum but separated from it by a sterile deposit of yellow clay 6 inches thick".⁶³ The associated pottery is red, painted with horizontal bands in black on a bright-red surface. There is no trace of Painted Grey Ware in this early strata. But the presence of N.B.P. Ware and the punch-marked coins being followed by the local issues bearing the name of Tripuri in the Brahmi script of 3rd

century B.C. on them, are sufficient evidence to prove that the city of Tripuri had already come into existence in the 4th-3rd century B.C. The local issues of Tripuri are of considerable interest as they neither bear the name of any king nor tribe but of the city itself which, like the seal-die of Sahajati (modern Bhita) reading, in letters of early Brahmi, *Sahajatiya nigamasa*, (of the township of Sahajati) must have been issued by the local administration of Tripuri to facilitate their trade. The later period is marked by the presence of coins of the late Satavahana kings and the Indo-Roman Red Polished Ware, suggestive of the flourishing trade of Tripuri.

The University of Sagar, under the direction of K.D. Bajpai conducted excavations at Tripuri during the period 1965 to 1969.⁶⁴ As a result the sequence of cultures revealed at Tripuri was found quite important from the point of view of the pre-Gupta history of the Dahala region. Above the late Satavahana phase at Tripuri were found baked clay sealings and several coins of the Bodhi rulers. The stratified evidence at Tripuri has enabled us to place the Bodhis between the close of the 2nd century A.D. and c. A.D. 300. Tripuri being the capital of the Kalachuris in the early medieval period, gained more political significance.

ANCIENT ROUTES

"The arms of sea, oceans, high mountains and rivers have always formed the natural boundaries for men. They are often boundaries in so far as they are really obstacles. But they are also bridges, centres of expansion and radiation linking together the men and the regions on either side of them"⁶⁵. The victorious nature of man did not despairingly submit to these obstacles but modified them to over-come their dangers and difficulties. The man constantly waded through these natural barriers, transporting his own ideas, habits and customs to distant countries. With the knowledge of navigation, the rivers far from being hinderances, proved to be the routes of exceptional value. The extensive trade through the land and water routes necessitated safe and clear passage for the

movement of various commodities. At the same time, the frequent trips of the Buddhist *acharyas* from one place to other with a view to propagate the *Dhamma* must also have given impetus to explore new land and water routes. The same routes could have been adopted by kings and emperors to undertake their victorious missions in various directions.

The Aryans moved eastward to the Gangetic plains which were more suitable to fulfil the needs of a pastoral society. The great Northern Route, *Uttarapatha* of Panini, which extended northward from Sakala (Sialkot), Takshasila (Taxila), Purushapura (Peshawar), Nagara-hara (Jalalabad), Kapisa (Begram) and Balhika (Balkh) to Central Asia and China, had already come into vogue⁶⁶. It was, however, further extended to south-east along with the rivers Ganga and Yamuna, linking the great cities of Mathura, Kaushambi, Kashi, Pataliputra and Tamralipti. Thus, the great Northern Route, which ran from Tamralipti on the eastern sea-coast upto the Oxus region, formed the greatest link to carry inland trade with the distant far-eastern countries. Kaushambi and Sahajati the two main maritime centres of the Bundelkhand region, played a dominant role in this commercial exchange. Express boats plying right through the mouths of the Ganga, reached either across or along the coast to Burma⁶⁷. The downward traffic ran through Kosala, Magadha and Champa right upto the mouth of the Ganga and thence either across the Bay of Bengal or along the coast to Burma. In fact, Kaushambi was the terminus of the main river route, whereas Sahajati (Bhita), was its nearest river station. This Kaushambi was the greatest river port for import and export of goods for the whole of North and Central India during the time of the Buddha. Further, the story of the Ceylonese princess, the daughter of King Vikramavahu, who was saved from the mid ocean after ship-wreck and brought to Kaushambi would suggest the trade links between Kaushambi and Ceylon⁶⁸.

Another important route, viz., the Southern Route or *Dakshinapatha*, which traversed the central Indian plateau, linked Kaushambi with Ujjaini and the sea-port of Bharukachha or Baryagaza on the west coast⁶⁹. With the introduction of the latter route it was no more difficult for the early dwellers of the Ganga Yamuna *Doab* to break

through the unpenetrable forests of the Vindhyan range. The distribution of N.B.P. Ware at Eran, Tripuri and right down to Maheshwar in the south and Ujjani in the west supports this view. The geographical position of Tripuri along with the ancient site of Bheraghat in its neighbourhood is much more interesting. Here the river Narmada turns southward and gives full scope for navigation. It has rightly been observed, "The importance of Bheraghat, which has a great annual fair and the notable *Chaunsatha Yogini* temple, must have consisted in its position as a landing place for goods ferried upstream as far as the river was navigable and as a river port for Tripuri, to which, as will be seen later, there is reason to believe a road ran south from Bhita and Kaushambi"⁷⁰. Moreover the N.B.P., at Eran and Tripuri, occurs with punch-marked coins and iron, preceded by the microliths and pottery, distinct from Painted Grey Ware. This precisely suggests the Aryan infiltration into this area in about 5th century B.C. or even later.

In the *Nalopakhyaṇa* of the *Mahabharata* it is stated that standing near Gwalior on the main Southern Route one could see many routes running towards the Southern direction. These included the routes to Vidarbha, South Kosala and *Dakshinapatha*. This South-western route of Bundelkhand is mentioned in the *Sutta-Nipat* which tells the story of the Brahmin, Bavarin, who, in order to understand the meaning of a course, despatched his disciples to consult the Buddha at Savatthi (modern Sahet-Mahet). The disciples started from the banks of Godavari and crossed through Patitthana (Paithan), Mahissati (Maheshwar), Ujjeni (Ujjain), Gonaddha, Vidisa (Bhilsa), Vanasvha, Kaushambi and Saket⁷¹. The same road extended northward upto Rajagaha, following Setvya, Kapilavatthu, Kusinara, Pava, Bhoganagara and Vesali.

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Bavari or Bavarin, a Brahmin ascetic, went from Savatthi to live on the banks of Godavari. Once a Brahmin came to him demanding five hundred pieces (coins). When Bavari told him of his poverty, the brahmin cursed him that his head would split in seven pieces. Bavari was greatly distressed and could not follow the exact meaning of this curse, when he was told about the omniscience of the Buddha, he ordered his disciples to go and contact him. It is beautifully described:—

“And clad in skins, their hair
 In braids, northwards departed they, first thro’
 Patitthana of Mulaka and thence
 On to Mahissati, to Ujjeni
 They went, to Gonaddha and Vedisa,
 To Vanasavhaya and Kausambi,
 To Saketa; and came to Savatthi,”

2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

MAURYA ERA

The history of Bundelkhand, in its true and proper perspective, starts from Asoka, the great Mauryan emperor. The various epigraphs viz., the Minor Rock Edicts at Rupanath (Jabalpur Dist.), the Gujarra (Datia Dist.) Pillar Edict and Minor Pillar Edict from Kaushambi (Dist. Allahabad) etc., prove that the regions of Bundelkhand were included within the Mauryan empire. The discovery of a copper coin bearing the name of a king (*Rano*) Dharmapala in the early Brahmi characters of 3rd-2nd century B.C. from Eran would show that he must have been one of the feudatory chiefs of the emperor Asoka¹. Earlier, there existed some difficulty in identifying the king *Devanampiyadasi* of the Asokan inscriptions, which do not bear the actual name of Asoka. It was only after the discovery of the Minor Rock Edict at Maski which addresses him as *Devanampiyas Asokas* that the term, *Devanampiyadasi* was found identical with the third Mauryan emperor, Asoka mentioned in the puranas². The term *Piyadasi* does not occur in the Maski and other Minor Rock Edicts, which led Barua to believe that the title *Piyadasi Raja* was an official title which was adopted by Asoka from the fifth year after the conquest of Kalinga and after performing his second consecration. But this theory can no more be upheld on the evidence produced by the Gujarra inscription which calls him *Devanampiya Piyadasino Asokarajasa*³.

According to the Buddhist chronicles, Asoka, at the age of eighteen, was posted as viceroy in the province of Avanti with his headquarters at Vidisa⁴. Hence the region of Bundelkhand was not new to Asoka when he occupied the Mauryan throne.

It is interesting to note that the Minor Rock Edict I, the earliest of Asoka's proclamations on matters relating to *Dhamma*, issued twelve years after his coronation sometime during 258-257 B.C. is found recorded at two places in Bundelkhand, viz., Rupanath and Gujarra in Jabalpur and Datia Districts in Madhya Pradesh. Thus Bundelkhand was one amongst the few regions to witness early Buddhist activity of Asoka.

Kaushambi was the provincial headquarters during the Asokan regime, as the Kaushambi Pillar Edict is addressed to the *Mahamatras* of Kaushambi. The edict proclaims that whosoever, monk or nun, defies the rules of the *Samgha*, should be caused to put on white robes and expelled from the order to live outside. Asoka took special pains to keep the *Samgha* of Kaushambi united. Asoka's queen Charuvaki also made gifts of mango groves and alm houses, etc., to the Buddhist establishments at Kaushambi which Asoka in one of his edicts ordered to be named after her⁵. Taking this keen interest of Asoka and his family members towards the *Samgha* of Kaushambi into consideration, it is not difficult to presume that Asoka might have sought his formal conversion at Kaushambi.

The Shahbazgarhi version of the Rock Edict XIII of Asoka mentions the name of the tribe *Palidas* along with the *Andhras* as a semi independent ruling people. Buhler, Bhandarkar and H.C. Ray Chaudhuri have identified them with the *Pulindas* of the *Puranas* who dwelt along the banks of Narmada in modern Jabalpur District⁶. The Rupanath edict makes it clear that the region around Rupanath (modern Jabalpur) was included within Asokan dominions. The Minor Rock Edict was issued while the emperor was touring the area to mix up with his subjects. Thus the entire Bundelkhand was included within the realm of Asokan empire.

THE SUNGAS

It appears that the last ruler of the Maurya dynasty, Brihadratha fell an easy prey to the conspiracy of his ministers. Pushyamitra Sunga, his commander-in-chief, declared himself king after assassinating his master. Another minister, who must have been in the South

established himself in the kingdom of Vidarbha which has been described in the *Malavikagnimitram* as 'newly planted'. Pushyamitra Sunga, who decidedly held his sway in parts of Bihar, U.P. and Madhya Pradesh, stationed Agnimitra, the crown prince, as governor of Vidisa (modern Bhilsa) to administer the territories of Bundelkhand and Eastern Malwa.

We do not hear anything about the original home or the pedigree of early Sunga kings, either from their epigraphs or coins⁷. The play, *Malavikagnimitram*, styles Agnimitra, son of Pushyamitra, as a scion of the Baimbika family⁸. Scholars have expressed divergent views on the subject. Keeping in mind the nomenclature of all the Sunga monarchs and their religious policy throughout, it is somewhat difficult to treat them as Iranians⁹. The mention of the name of *Sungiputra*, a teacher in the *Brihadarnyaka Upanishad*, no doubt, hints at the possibility of the origin of Sunga clan¹⁰. Yet there exists a big gap of time to prove the historicity of this statement. If such a clan did exist why do we not find any other reference to the Sungas in the subsequent literature?

It will, therefore, be pertinent to put more reliance on the evidence met in *Malavikagnimitram* of Kalidasa, who should have been the nearest contemporary of the Sunga period. Incidentally, we do get a reference of the *Baimbika* family at Bharhut wherein one Dikshita Budhi is said to be the house-holder of the *Baimbikas*, residing somewhere around the vicinity of *Bharhut*¹¹. *Bimba* in Sanskrit means red which is equivalent to 'Srona'. Hence, the *Baimbikas* might be living on the bank of river, Sona, which flows south of Bharhut.

According to the drama, *Malavikagnimitram* of Kalidas, Virasena, a collateral brother of the queen of Agnimitra, was appointed as a commander of a frontier fortress which stood on the banks of the river Mandakini¹². Pargiter has shown only two rivers of this name, one in the Banda District of Bundelkhand, and the other in south¹³. The river Mandakini of the play *Malavikagnimitra* must be located in the Banda District of Bundelkhand, as the dominions of the Sungas did not extend beyond Narmada in the south. Further, the kingdom of Agnimitra extended around upper part of central

India, whereas the Vidarbha region was under the control of the scions of the ministers of the last Maurya king. The two houses did not maintain cordial relations with each other. Hence the fortress on the bank of Mandakini, which was governed by Virasena, a collateral brother of the queen of Agnimitra, must be placed somewhere within the dominions of Agnimitra only. We venture to identify this frontier fortress of the Sungas with the fort of Kalanjara which lies not far from the river Mandakini. According to Cunningham, whose view is based on the epigraphic and other archaeological data, "the fortress may have been founded at least as early as the beginning of the Christian era"¹⁴. It is highly probable that the early Sungas, taking the geographical situation into consideration, constructed a fortress at Kalanjara to defend their southern frontiers.

The play *Malavikagnimitram* further mentions a conflict between the forces of Vasumitra, the grandson of Pushyamitra Sunga and the Yavanas (Greeks) which took place on the southern right bank of the river 'Sindhu', which has been identified with a river on the western borders of Bundelkhand in central India.¹⁵ This episode of *Malavikagnimitram* has also been mentioned by Patanjali, the contemporary of Pushyamitra Sunga.¹⁶ The statement of Patanjali *arunad Yavanah Saketam: arunad Yavanah Madhyamikam* illustrates that the forces of some Indo-Greek chief had overran the territories around Saketa (modern Ayodhya in U.P.) and Madhyamika (Nagari, Chittor) in Rajasthan. Incidentally, a hoard of Indo-Bactrian coins belonging to Menander, Apollodotos, Antimachos and Bakratides, etc., was discovered from the village Pachokhara in the Hamirpur District of Bundelkhand. This literary and numismatic data proves that the forces of a Yavana leader had forced their way through Rajputana and attacked right upto the regions of Bundelkhand where the decisive battle was fought.¹⁷ The foreign forces were defeated and repulsed. There exists a good deal of controversy regarding the identity of the Yavana leader. Unfortunately, the literary sources do not disclose his identity. H.C. Ray Chaudhuri, on the numismatic and literary grounds, holds that the Yavan chief must be Demetrius, as Menander could not be a contemporary of Pushyamitra Sunga.¹⁸

In the opinion of R.K. Mookerji, the Sunga ruler Pushyamitra had to fight with the Yavanas, first under Demetrius before and soon after his accession, and for a second time under Menander about the close of his reign.¹⁹ D.C. Sircar, scrutinising the variant readings of the manuscripts of the *Yuga Purana* section of the *Gargi Samhita*, believes that the first Yavana invasion under the leadership of Demetrius (c. 215-190 B.C.) took place during the reign of the last Mauryan ruler.²⁰ The commander-in-chief Pushyamitra Sunga fought and repulsed the invaders inspite of the weakness of the reigning monarch. This enhanced the popularity of Pushyamitra Sunga who easily dethroned his master and usurped the Mauryan throne. This hypothesis gains support from the reference of the Yavana's invasion which took place during the life time of Patanjali who was a contemporary of Pushyamitra Sunga since the *Mahabhasya* refers to its author as having participated in a sacrifice performed by Pushyamitra²¹. It seems to refer to the second invasion under Menander's leadership about the close of the 2nd century B.C.

It may be pointed out that no epigraphic or other records of Pushyamitra or his near descendants have been found in or around Pataliputra. They are, however, known from the region between Ayodhya, Kaushambi and Bharhut. It is quite plausible to think that Pushyamitra, in order to check the onslaughts of the foreign invaders, shifted his capital from Pataliputra to Kaushambi which was a provincial headquarter at the time of the Mauryas. Kaushambi, being in the centre of the Sunga empire, was a better suited place for being a metropolis from its strategic point of view. There seem to have existed several vice-royalties, viz., Vidisa or Dasarna, Ayodhya, Ahichchhatra and Mathura under the royal princes, who, after the demise of Pushyamitra Sunga, declared independence and led the Sunga empire to disintegrate into several smaller principalities.²² The relationship between these smaller kingdoms of the Sunga lineage has been borne out by inscriptional as well as the numismatic evidences. The Pabhosa, Bharhut and Mora inscriptions reveal the close relationship between the rulers of Kaushambi, Mathura and Panchal.

Pushyamitra Sunga had a reign of an unusual length. He was still on the throne when his grandson was old enough to command the

armies against the Yavanas. It is natural, therefore, that his son and grandson could not get sufficient time and opportunity to keep the Sunga empire intact. With the demise of Pushyamitra the distant governors declared their independence. Agnimitra and Vasumitra, probably had to be satisfied with the regions around Magadha, Kaushambi and Vidisa as their kingdom. In the meantime, the Scythian inroads on Malwa from Saurashtra started a fresh trouble which the descendants of Pushyamitra could not check. Ultimately, the part of western Malwa fell a prey in the hands of the Sakas. Recently some coins, bearing Scythian names and assignable to the later half of the 2nd century B.C. and early 1st century B.C., have been acquired from Ujjain which proves its occupation by the Sakas in the first century B.C.²³ The last ruler Devabhuti of the main Sunga line was killed by Kanva Vasudeva who occupied the Vidisa region. The Kanvas were later on succeeded by the Satavahanas in the eastern Malwa. Thus the region of Bundelkhand formed an integral part of early Sunga empire.

LATER SUNGAS

The distintegration of the Sunga empire had started with the demise of Pushyamitra in 151 B.C. as stated earlier. The kingdom was divided into several smaller principalities governed by the scions of the Sunga dynasty. The Sunga houses of Bharhut, Kaushambi, Ayodhya, Ahichchhatra and Mathura are known from the epigraphic as well as the numismatic sources. It is, however, difficult to prove that all these names ending with Mitra found in the inscriptions and coins from the above places really belonged to the house of Pushyamitra Sunga. Bajpai is of the opinion that the major parts of Magadha were now under the rulers of Kaushambi whose coins and inscriptions are known from various parts of Bihar²⁴ also. The other three houses of the Mitras at Ayodhya, Ahichchhatra and Mathura seem to have continued their rule for several hundred years independently in their respective regions, as is evident from their regional coinage and inscriptions.

Kaushambi has produced a huge number of coins belonging to

the different monarchs of 'Mitra' ending names, ranging from the 3rd century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D. It is, however, difficult to give a chronological order of the reigns of these numerous monarchs.

The *Puranas* yield a genealogical list of the ten Sunga monarchs. They are, Pushyamitra, Agnimitra, Vasujayeshtha, Vasumitra, Odraka, Pulindaka, Ghosha, Vajramitra, Bhaga (Bhagavata) and Devabhuti.²⁵ The years assigned to the reigns of these monarchs actually exceed the total number of years allocated in the *Puranas* for the family. The chronology also seems to be somewhat confused. The historicity of some of these names has been proved by the discoveries of a huge number of coins and inscriptions belonging to them. Out of this list, the three chief monarchs viz., Pushyamitra, Agnimitra and Vasumitra have already been discussed. R.K. Mookerji identified Vasujayeshtha with Jethamitra whose coins have been found from Kaushambi.²⁶ The fifth king Odraka has been identified with Udaka mentioned in the Pabhosa inscription.²⁷ Marshall identified the fifth 'Sunga' with Kasiputra Bhagabhadra mentioned in the Garuda Pillar Inscription found at Vidisa.²⁸

It seems that all the names of the Sunga rulers in the Pauranic lists belonged to the direct line of Pushyamitra Sunga whereas the remaining other monarchs known from the coins and inscriptions must have been the later offshoots of the Sunga dynasty which continued to rule for a longer period as feudatory chiefs. Kaushambi continued to be the headquarter of the Sungas for about three centuries. The Pabhosa inscription mentions that the cave was excavated in the tenth year of the reign of Odraka. The donor of the cave was Asadhasena, a maternal uncle of Bahasatimitra, who has been identified with the king then ruling at Kaushambi and whose coins have also been found from the above place.²⁹

In another inscription from the same place, we find that Asadhasena belonged to the royal family of Ahichchhatra, the capital of North Panchala in Bareilly District of Uttar Pradesh. Thus, the Sungas of Ahichchhatra, Mathura, Kaushambi and Vidisa seem to have been inter-connected with matrimonial relationship.

The *Mitra* ending names so far derived from the coins found at Kaushambi are numerous. Allan mentioned only four names of the

Mitra king in his catalogue³⁰. Altekar³¹ added eight names whereas K.D. Bajpai³² brought to light twenty five rulers of this dynasty at Kaushambi, some of whom are known from the inscriptions as well. The early rulers of the later Sunga dynasty at Kaushambi, as Bajpai says, are Sungavarman, Visvadeva, Agaraja and Dhanabhuti who are known from the coins as well as inscriptions found at or around Kaushambi³³. The two inscriptions found at Bharhut, one on the Batnara Gateway Pillar, which is fragmentary, giving only the words, *Sunganam raja* and the other on the Pillar of the eastern gateway, reading "In the kingdom of Sungana (Srughna)," this *torana*, with its ornamented stone work and plinth was caused to be made by king 'Dhana-Bhuti, son of Vachi and Aga Raja, son of Goti and grandson of Visa Deva, son of Gagi' are quite important³⁴. Thus the genealogy of the royal family of the Sungas, as given in the inscription of Bharhut, is as follows:—

1. Visva-deva
2. Aga Raja
3. Dhanabhuti

Incidentally, the Mathura inscription continues the genealogy for two more generations, giving the names of Vadha Pala, who was the son of Dhanabhuti I and his son, Dhanabhuti³⁵ II. Cunningham assigns the dates 240 to 220 B.C. for Dhanabhuti I and 180 to 160 B.C. for Dhanabhuti II³⁶. Accordingly, Dhanabhuti I should be a contemporary of Asoka, the Mauryan emperor. This view of Cunningham does not seem to be tenable. The main reason for assigning such an early date to Bharhut inscriptions by Cunningham seems to have been based on the similarity of alphabetical characters with the Asokan records. However, it is precisely known that the whole tract along the Ganga in upper India was included within Mauryan empire³⁷. Secondly, the Sungas seem to have gained independent status only from the period of Pushyamitra who slew the last Mauryan king and declared himself as an independent ruler. Altekar has published a coin of Aga Raja, whom he considers to be a ruler of Kaushambi³⁸. In fact Kaushambi and Bharhut, which lie at a distance of about 100 miles from each other,

were connected by the high road running from Ujjain to Pataliputra. It is quite possible that Aga Raja of Bharhut inscription is identical with Aga Raja of Kaushambi coins and he must have ruled over the north-eastern parts of Bundelkhand. Altekar has published a coin of Varunamitra, whom he considers to be identical with the ruler of same name, mentioned in a fragmentary inscription Gotiputasa Varunamitasa kept in Municipal Museum, Allahabad³⁹. The name of the King in above inscription is inscribed as Gotiputasa Varunamitasa⁴⁰. Altekar opined that Gotiputasa Varunamitra might have been a brother of Gotiputa Aga Raja of Bharhut inscription. To quote him, "On the other hand, when we note that Bharhut and Kaushambi are fairly close to each other, the possibility cannot be ruled out of these two places being under the rule of two brothers, Gotiputa Varunamitra and Gotiputa Aga Raja".⁴¹ Paleographically they can be put between 100-75 B.C. Accordingly, Dhanabhuti I of eastern Gateway of Bharhut *stupa* can be placed somewhere between 80 to 60 B.C. There is nothing to prove that the Sunga house of Bharhut came to an end after Dhanabhuti. They were probably uprooted later either by the Kanvas or by the Satavahanas, who swept away the remains of the Sunga power and appointed Sisunandi to govern the Vidisa region. However, this event must have taken place sometime at the end of 1st century B.C., as we find the third Satavahana king, Satakarni (27-17 B.C.) mentioned at Sanchi⁴². The other Sunga rulers of Kaushambi, with non-Mitra ending names are Vavaghosa⁴³, Jyeshthagupta, Parvata⁴⁴, Indradeva, Vishnudeva and Dhanadeva, etc., who are known from the coins. The dynasty came to an end somewhere in the second century A.D.

THE KUSHANAS

After the downfall of the Sungas, there was no paramount sovereign to maintain the solidarity of the Magadhan empire. India was parcelled out into several small political units and the gates of north-west frontiers lay open to the foreign invaders. The barbaric hordes of the Sakas, Pahlavas and Kushanas poured into the Indian realm trying their luck in an atmosphere of uncertainty. Saka—

Kshtraps of Mathura and Ujjain held up their sway in large parts of the northern and western India, but the region of Bundelkhand seems to have remained undisturbed as no literary or Archaeological data is available to confirm their hold over this region. Even the long list of kings in the Junagarh Inscription of the vanquished adversaries of Rudradaman does not include this area. The adventures of the Indo-Parthian line contended themselves with the conquest of Afghanistan, Punjab and Sind and did not move further south. But the Great Kushanas, who exterminated the Pahlavas, succeeded in building up a large empire which extended from Kapisa, Gandhara and Kashmir to Benaras⁴⁵. Kaushambi is said to have been included within the realms of Kanishka I, as an inscribed image of a red sandstone Bodhisattva discovered in A.D. 1934 from Kaushambi would indicate⁴⁶. The inscription, dated in the 2nd regnal year, is so far the earliest record of Kanishka reign. Kanishka must have, therefore, advanced towards east as soon as he acquired the throne. According to G.R. Sharma, "Buddhamitra installed Bodhisattva at Kaushambi on at least two different occasions, in the year 2, if this be the correct date of the Kaushambi (Allahabad Museum) record, and the year 6. The present inscription was recovered from the ruins of the Ghositarama monastery, the traditional abode of Buddha in the city. It is possible that the other image was also set up in the same monastic establishment which was undoubtedly a leading Buddhist centre of northern India"⁴⁷. Epigraphs dated 24 and 28 years of Vasishka, an immediate successor of Kanishka, have been found at Sanchi near Vidisa, the ancient capital of Eastern Malwa⁴⁸. The Kushana coins were also found at Bhita in the Allahabad District⁴⁹. The excavations at Kaushambi have also yielded coins of the Kushanas and a seal bearing the legend *(M)aharajasya/Rajatirajasya Devaputrasya/Kanishkasya prayoga*, which might further suggest that Kaushambi was included within Kanishka's empire⁵⁰. Sharma holds that there is a marked dissimilarity in the coins of the earlier Mitra group of rulers of Kaushambi and the later issues of the rulers like Neva, the Maghas and others. "A departure of this kind from the established tradition is probably to be explained by an interregnum of extraneous rule"⁵¹. No later coins were found during the excavation in the same strata with

the Mitra issues. Hence the Kusanas should have succeeded the early Mitra group of kings at Kaushambi, before it was overpowered by the Maghas. However, several scholars do not agree to the above proposition and regard the Kushana coins found at Kaushambi as drifts⁵². It must, however, be concluded that the inclusion of Kaushambi in the Kushana dominions, even if it was historically true, must have been short-lived and the Kushana wave receded very soon.

MAGHAS

The power of the Kushanas in India dwindled shortly after the reign of Vasudeva (A.D. 145-176). His inscriptions have been found only in Mathura region which indicates that he gradually lost his hold over the north western parts of the Kushana dominions.

The political forces responsible for ousting the Kushanas from the Gangetic region were the Maghas in the East and Nagas in the North-west. Ultimately, the Kushana power was eliminated even from Mathura where rulers of the Naga family come into power.

The rulers of the Megha dynasty of Kaushambi have been known from their enormous number of coins and epigraphs. The origin of the family is, however, still shrouded in mystery. No doubt, the *Puranas* mention nine wise and powerful kings, popularly known as Megha⁵³. This similarity in dynastic designation would prompt one to identify the Megha kings of the *Puranas* with the Megha rulers whose coins and epigraphs are found distributed in a wide area from Fatehpur in the north to Bandhogarh in south. The Megha in the *Puranas* are described as the rulers of Kosala, but no record of the dynasty has come from anywhere within the boundaries of Dakshina Kosala. According to Ajay Mitra Shastri, "it is possible that the *Puranas* have erroneously referred to Kosala instead of Vatsa or some other geographical name as the dominion of the Meghas. Such errors are not very rare in the *Puranas*"⁵⁴. Another possibility could be that Bandhogarh region was in those days included within the political boundaries of Dakshina Kosala. It is also likely that south Kosala at one time formed a part of the Megha dominions⁵⁵.

The earliest archaeological records of the Meghas are the two sealings found during the excavations at Bhita, one of Rajan Vasishthiputra Bhimasena and other of Maharaja Gautamiputra Sivamagha⁵⁶. John Marshall assigns these sealings to the 2nd or 3rd century A.D. Many more records of the dynasty have been brought to light from the regions of Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand which reveal several other names of the Megha rulers of Kaushambi⁵⁷.

Besides, the records found at Bandhogarh mention the names of the Maharaja Vasishthiputra Bhimasena (year 51), his son Pothasiri (years 86 to 88) and grandson Bhadadeva (year 90)⁵⁸. Motichandra has identified this Pothasiri with Prishthasriya of the Kaushambi coins which contain, among other devices, the bull and tree in railing.⁵⁹ The symbols of 'bull and tree in railing' also occur on the sealings found at Bhita. These are also present on the Magha coins from Fatephur⁶⁰ an adjoining District of Bundelkhand. A fragmentary inscription of Maharaja Sivamagha has been found at Bandhogarh.⁶¹ Inscriptions of Vaisravana have also come from Bandhogarh.⁶²

A large number of clay sealings and coins of the Magha ruler from Kaushambi and Bhita prove that the Maghas were an independent power of Kaushambi and issued their own currency. A few coins including that of Prashthasriya (Prashthasri) have been gathered in the excavation at Bhita.⁶³ Allan describes some Magha coins kept in the British Museum.⁶⁴ The first hoard of Magha coins was found at the village Saton or Haswa in the Fatehpur District of Uttar Pradesh.⁶⁵ Another hoard is said to have been found at the village Orha in the Banda District of U.P.⁶⁶ A similar hoard is reported to have been found in the vicinity of Kaushambi at Mirzapur. The third hoard was acquired from a scrap dealer who reported to have found that somewhere near the ancient site of Kaushambi. It would, thus, appear that the coins of the Maghas have been acquired mainly from Kaushambi, Banda and Fatehpur in Uttar Pradesh. A scrutiny of epigraphic records, clay sealings and coins proved that the Maghas ruled for some generations from Bandhogarh in the Shahdol District of Madhya Pradesh in the south to the Fatehpur District of Uttar Pradesh in the north with Kaushambi as their headquarter.

The chronology of the Maghas is confused and complicated. They

have recorded all their epigraphs from preceding to following regnal years. The era to which these inscriptions refer to is much more controversial, but the records seem to be dated in a continuous reckoning ranging from the year 51 to the year 139. Varying suggestions have been put forward on the matter. Daya Ram Sahni⁶⁷ and Fleet⁶⁸ conjectured that the records refer to the Gupta era, but D.R. Bhandarkar,⁶⁹ K.P. Jayaswal,⁷⁰ N.G. Majumdar,⁷¹ A. Ghosh⁷² and Krishnadeva⁷³ refer these dates to the Chedi era. Moti Chandra,⁷⁴ V.V. Mirashi,⁷⁵ D.C. Sircar,⁷⁶ N.P. Chakravarti,⁷⁷ A.S. Altekar⁷⁸ and K.D. Bajpai⁷⁹ are inclined to date these in the Saka era of A.D. 78.

The objection in referring these records to the Gupta era is their paleography which agrees more to the Kushana than the Gupta inscriptions. If the Gupta era is assigned, the kings mentioned therein become contemporaries of the Gupta emperors viz., Chandragupta I, Samudragupta and Chandragupta II. But the Pauranic as well as the epigraphic data would reveal that the regions around Prayag (adjoining Kaushambi) formed a part of the Gupta empire from the period of Chandragupta I onward. In that case the Magha rulers would become vassals of the Imperial Guptas. But there is no reference to the Gupta overlords in Magha inscriptions. The issue of currency itself indicated that the Maghas were independent rulers.

Referring to this as the Chedi era, A. Ghosh states that the inscription is a private record and not a state document. The Chedi era was of course prevalent even during the time of the Guptas. Now when and how the Chedi era came into vogue in this region? No record of the Chedis earlier to A.D. 973 has been found in central India. If these dates are referred to the Chedi era some of the Magha kings become contemporaries to the Chedi era some of the Magha Gupta emperors allow their feudatories to issue coins in the heart of their kingdom? These objections suggest that these regnal years do not belong to the Chedi era.

The stratification of Bhita finds, paleography, the method of dating, the mixed dialect of the inscriptions bear out their close similarity with the dated records of the Saka era. Thus the records of the Magha dynasty should be referred to the Saka era only.

Ajay Mitra Shastri discovered a solitary coin with the legend

Maharaja Magha whom he considers an independent ruler and the founder of the dynasty, named Magha. Excepting his name nothing is known about this ruler.⁸⁰

The next member of the dynasty, known from sealings, epigraphs and coins is Maharaja Bhimasena. A seal from Bhita assigns him the regal title, *rajan*.⁸¹ However, the painted inscription of the Ginja hill in the erstwhile Rewa State and another inscription at Bandhogarh in the Shahdol District of Madhya Pradesh call him *maharaja*.⁸² The same inscription calls him *Vasishtheputra* or the son of Vasishthi.

The Scholars expressed divergent views about the identity of Bhimasena. D.R. Bhandarkar identified him with Bhimavarman.⁸³ This view has not been accepted as the coins and epigraphs of both the rulers are quite distinct. A. Ghosh drew a distinction in the regal titles *rajan* of the Bhita seal inscription and *maharaja* of the Ginja hill record and called the two chiefs Bhimasena I and Bhimasena⁸⁴ II. Shastri does not agree and holds that *rajan* probably indicates the earlier phase of Bhimasena when he assumed a lower title. Later he extended his sway and designated himself as *maharaja*.⁸⁵

Some scholars have opined that the Magha ruler Bhimasena initially ruled over Baghelkhand region, having his capital seat at Bandhogarh, where his inscriptions have been discovered.⁸⁶ As Kaushambi was then under the Kushana's rule, no inscription of Bhimasena has been recovered from there. This view is again not free from doubts. Firstly, there is no positive evidence to prove that the Kushanas held Kaushambi within their dominion. It is quite possible that the Bodhisattva Statue, which bears an inscription dated in the second regnal year of Kanishka I, was fashioned and inscribed at Mathura and was brought later to Kaushambi to be installed at the promenade of Lord Buddha. Secondly, the seal inscription of Bhita and the coins bearing name of Bhimasena are adequate evidence to establish his hold over Kaushambi region.

The known dates of Bhimasena's reign are 51 and 52, equivalent to A.D. 129 and 130, whereas the next earliest known date of his successor Bhadramagha is 81 (A.D. 159). It may, therefore, be surmised that the reign of Bhimasena came to an end prior to A.D. 159.

SUCCESSORS OF BHIMASENA

The next ruler, whose records dated 81, 83, 86 and 87 have come from Kosam, is Bhadramagha. The title *maharaja* employed for him in these records would show that he was an independent ruler of Kaushambi. A clay sealing in the Allahabad Museum calls him *Kautsiputra*, the son of Kautsi.⁸⁷ About ten inscriptions with the dates ranging from 86 to 88 have been found from Bandhogarh, wherein *Maharaja Kautsiputra Pothasiri* has been declared as the son and successor of Bhimasena. This overlapping in dates of Bhadramagha (81, 83, 86 and 87) and of Pothasiri (Praushthsri) (86 to 88) has created a good deal of confusion. D.C. Sircar has suggested that Bhadramagha, who might have been Bhimasena's younger step brother or Praushthsri's elder step brother, was the immediate successor of Bhimasena. But Praushthsri rebelled against Bhadramagha and declared himself as king in the southern part of the kingdom about the closing years of the latter's reign and later extended his authority over the Kaushambi area also.⁸⁸ Mirashi has read the name of Pothasiri's son as Bhaddadeva and identified him with Bhadramagha. He, thus, solves the problem of overlapping dates by propounding the theory of joint rule.⁸⁹ However, this does not seem plausible for the simple reason that the inscriptions and coins of Bhadramagha nowhere call him Bhaddadeva. In fact Bhadramagha is addressed in Bhita clay sealing as Kautsiputra, whereas Bhattadeva is known through his epigraphs as Kausikiputra.

It may possibly be surmised that all the three rulers of the Magha dynasty viz., Bhadramagha, Praushthasri and Sivamagha with the metronymic 'Kautsiputra' applied before their names, were the sons and successors of Bhimasena who ruled over a vast territory extending from Kaushambi to Bandhogarh. Bhimasena might have placed his son, Praushthasri at the southern most headquarter, Bandhogarh. Bhadramagha succeeded his father at Kaushambi whereas his younger brother, Sivamagha, occupied the area around Varanasi, after the extinction of the power of the Kushanas in that region. The discovery of clay sealing bearing the name, Kautsiputra Sivamagha would testify the above view.⁹⁰ An epigraph of Maharaja Sivamagha

from Kosam might suggest that he ruled over Kaushambi probably after Bhadramagha.⁹¹

BHATTADEVA

Praushthasri seems to have been succeeded by his son, Kausiki-putra Bhattadeva, whose epigraphs have been discovered at Bandhogarh.⁹² An inscription dated in the year 90 would suggest that Bhattadeva was an independent ruler of Bandhogarh during A.D. 168⁹³. Nothing more is known about his reign.

VAISRAVANA

Another notable ruler of Magha dynasty, known from coins and epigraphs, is Vaisravana. He is said to be the son of Bhadrabala, who is known as Mahasenapati in Bandhogarh inscriptions.⁹⁴ Vaisravana is titled *rajan*. Another inscription from Kosam bearing the year 107 mentions him as *maharaja*.⁹⁵ These two distinctive titles have created controversy. Sircar suggests that Vaisravana first acted as Viceroy of the Kaushambi kings in southern part of their kingdom and later established himself on the throne of his masters.⁹⁶ Whatever be the case, the discovery of epigraphs suggests that Vaisravana ruled over Kaushambi and Bandhogarh.

It is not known as how Vaisravana came to occupy the throne of Magha dynasty. His name also does not indicate whether he belonged to the Magha line of kings. Yet, we know it for certain that he ruled over the Magha territories during the year A.D. 185. Shastri has pointed out that Vaisravana restruck some of the coins of Sivamagha I, whom he succeeded.⁹⁷ Again, some coins of Vaisravana are found restruck by Sivamagha, whom Shastri considers to be Sivamagha II and an immediate successor of Vaisravana.⁹⁸

BHIMAVARMAN

The last notable ruler of the dynasty seems to have been Bhimavarman whose coins and epigraphs are found. His three known inscriptions from Kaushambi are dated in the regnal years 122 (A.D. 200), 130 (A.D. 208) and 139⁹⁹ (A.D. 217). Some scholars have opined that rulers like Bhimavarman and Vaisravana did not belong to Magha.

dynasty, as their names like other rulers of the family do not end in Magha.¹⁰⁰ Yet the general fabric and typology of the coins of above rulers are exactly similar to those of the kings with Magha-ending names. Hence Bhimavarman can be regarded as the last important ruler of the Magha dynasty.

THE IMPERIAL GUPTAS

The discovery of the inscribed brass statuettes of the Buddha in the ruins of Dhanesar Khera, to the west of the village Ichchhawar in Pailani Tahsil of Banda District are of considerable importance¹⁰¹. The inscription of the statuette No. II mentions it to be a meritorious gift of one Mahadevi, the queen of Sri Haridasa of the Gupta race. The characters of the inscription are of an early date and have been assigned by Smith as not later than A.D. 400. The characters of the inscription on the pedestal of statuette No. I are decidedly earlier and according to Smith datable to not later than A.D. 300. The term *Guptavamsodita* is significant. Nowhere do we come across with the name Haridasa in the pedigree of the Gupta kings. Copper coins of a king called Hari Gupta have come to light¹⁰². Even the Bharhut railing inscriptions mention names like Sarpa Gupta and Dharma Gupta during the period of the later Sungas.¹⁰³ Similarly, a circular lead seal of king Indra Gupta, datable to 200 B.C., was recovered from Eran in Madhya Pradesh¹⁰⁴. Yet we do not know if these early Gupta chiefs had any connection with the later Imperial Guptas.

The supremacy of Maghas in south-eastern Bundelkhand and the Nagas in western parts of Bundelkhand and eastern Malwa was challenged by the rising power of the Guptas. According to a Puranic verse, the political boundaries of the Gupta dominions included Prayaga (Allahabad) on the Ganga, Saketa (Oudh) and Magadha (south Bihar)¹⁰⁵. Scholars generally accept the above verse to mark the extent of the kingdom of Chandragupta I. As Allahabad is only thirty-two miles upward from Kausambi, it may be presumed that the south-eastern Bundelkhand might have been included within the Gupta empire right from the reign of Chandra-

gupta I¹⁰⁶. Since Chandragupta I has been styled *Maharajadhiraja* in family records of the Imperial Guptas, it can be presumed that he ruled over an extensive empire. It may thus be surmised that Chandragupta I put an end to the rule of Maghas of Kaushambi and Bandhogarh and included their territories within the Gupta dominions. Such an event might have taken place before A.D. 320, when Chandragupta I ascended the throne and founded the Gupta era¹⁰⁷. With the present score of our knowledge, it is not possible to identify the Magha king who was defeated by Chandragupta I. Still, as Shastri believes, "The gap between Bhimavarman and the end of the dynasty is quite sufficient to accommodate the Magha chiefs under consideration"¹⁰⁸. There is not positive evidence to strengthen the view that Chandragupta I had conquered whole of Bundelkhand. Certain scholars believe that it was Samudragupta who brought the regions of Bundelkhand and eastern Malwa under the direct sway of Imperial Guptas.

SAMUDRAGUPTA

Samudragupta, as per the Allahabad Pillar Inscription, was a great conqueror and he spent most of his time in battlefields. He successfully carved out an extensive empire which included nearly whole of northern India, excepting Kashmir, western Punjab, western Rajputana, Sindh and Gujarat. In southern side it comprised the highlands of Chhattisgarh and Orissa with a long stretch of territory along the eastern coast extending as far south as Chingleput and even further. Bajpai¹⁰⁹ and Mirashi¹¹⁰ hold that it was Samudragupta who conquered and brought Bundelkhand under the Gupta rule. Bajpai believes that Rudradeva whose copper coins and a clay seal are found from Jhusi, near Allahabad, was the contemporary ruler defeated by Samudragupta¹¹¹. Mirashi thinks that Balavarman, referred to in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription, was a Magha ruler who was exterminated by Samudragupta¹¹². It has already been stated that Naga kings, like Nagasena and Ganapati Naga, who are mentioned in the Allahabad *Prasasti* amongst rulers of northern India, belonged to the Naga houses of Padmavati (Padam Pawaya), Vidisa (Bhilsa) and Mathura. By conquering the

Maghas of Kaushambi and Bandhogarh and the Nagas of Central India, Samudragupta became the master of the entire Bundelkhand region, yet he did not destroy the Naga kings, as we find them at a later stage, maintaining matrimonial relations with the ruling Gupta princes.

Samudragupta marched further westward and conquered eastern Malwa. An inscription from Eran (Airikina) mentions that Samudragupta made the city of Eran a resort of self enjoyment (*svabhoganagara*)¹¹³. It would suggest that Samudragupta conquered the regions of eastern Malwa, which thereafter constituted a province (*vishaya*) of the Gupta empire. He also conquered the Atavika territory, including the Dabhala region (modern Baghelkhand) extending upto Jabalpur¹¹⁴. The Allahabad Pillar Inscription further mentions that Samudragupta conquered from king Vyaghraraja the forest tract, called Mahakantara, which extended northward upto the southern parts of Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand. A king Vyaghradeva is also referred to in the inscriptions discovered from Nachna¹¹⁵ and Ganja¹¹⁶ in Central India. Raychaudhuri holds that the regions of Nachna and Ganja were under the direct rule of Guptas during the time of the Vakataka Prithivishena I, a contemporary of Samudragupta. Thus Vyaghradeva of Nachna and Ganja inscriptions seems to be identical with Vyaghraraja¹¹⁷. Krishnaswami Aiyangar holds that Vyaghra of Nachna and Ganja inscriptions acknowledged the authority of the Vakataka ruler Prithivishena¹¹⁸ I. Dubreuil opines that the Uchchhakalpa chiefs used Gupta era in their records and so Vyaghra of Nachna and Ganja, ruling during A.D. 475 would make him a feudatory of the Vakataka ruler, Prithivishena¹¹⁹ II. Mirashi subscribes the views of Aiyangar¹²⁰. This view too cannot be regarded as free from doubts. As the majority of scholars believe the Uchchhakalpa records to have been dated in Gupta era, it will be difficult to accept the identification of Vyaghraraja of Allahabad *Prasasti* with Vyaghradeva of Nachna and Ganja inscriptions, which place him somewhere during the last quarter of fifth century A.D. It is more probable that the Uchchhakalpa chief Vyaghradeva was a feudatory of Prithivishena II, the Vakataka king. The Vakatakas of the Deccan held indirect control over some parts of Central

India through their feudatories. No doubt, the early Uchchhakalpa chiefs paid allegiance to the Gupta monarchs, yet Vyaghradeva seems to have shifted his loyalty to the Vakataka kings.

RAMA GUPTA

A large number of coins and epigraphic records are inscribed with the name of Rama Gupta who seems to have ruled the tract of eastern Malwa and some parts of Bundelkhand during this period. The historicity of Rama Gupta, said to have succeeded Samudragupta, is again controversial. An episode is found mentioned in the drama 'Devi-Chandra-Gupta' wherein Rama Gupta is said to have been over powered by some unknown Saka king, who demanded the hand of his wife, Dhrudevi. In order to save his position, Rama Gupta seems to have accepted the humiliating demand and agreed to send his wife to the Saka monarch. Chandra Gupta, the younger brother of the ruling Gupta king, protested against this act of dis-honour and himself went to the city of Saka king in the disguise of queen, Dhrudevi and murdered him. This heroic performance of Chandra Gupta strengthened his position and he, later on, killed his elder brother also, who had put the Gupta-house to shame, and married his widow queen, Dhrudevi. The story in slightly different versions finds mention in other Sanskrit works too, such as Harsha-Charita and Kavya-Mimansa.

Scholars like Prof. Altekar are inclined to believe that Rama-Gupta intervened between Samudragupta and Chandra Gupta II¹²¹. Raychudhuri finds the literary evidence on the point to be discrepant and hardly conclusive¹²². R.C. Majumdar, although hesitant to put much reliance on literary evidence, observed, 'On the other hand, as there is independent evidence of the existence of such a tradition as early as the seventh century A.D. and of its wide-spread acceptance all over India, we can hardly dismiss it off-hand as altogether a figment of imagination¹²³. The main reason for scholars in not accepting the historic value of the drama was so far lack of archaeological evidence.

During the recent years, a large number of copper coins bearing the legends, *Ramagu (p) ta*, *Ramagu* or *maguta* have been discovered

from the eastern Malwa. P.L. Gupta published six copper coins with the figure of a seated lion, having its tail curved upward, on the obverse and a crescent at the top and legend below on the reverse¹²⁴. The above coins came from Bhilsa in Madhya Pradesh. Gupta attributed these coins to Rama Gupta, the elder brother of Chandra Gupta II. H.V. Trivedi published some more coins of Rama Gupta¹²⁵. These coins, however, do not prove that Rama Gupta of the legends is identical to Rama Gupta of the Imperial Gupta dynasty; the former might have been a local ruler of eastern Malwa.

K.D. Bajpai during excavations at Eran found a large number of round copper coins with the name of Rama Gupta on the obverse and a seated Garuda with outstretched wings on the reverse¹²⁶. Sometimes a *garudadhvaja* is found in the centre of the obverse. The fabric and type of Rama Gupta's coins are based on the earlier currency of eastern Malwa. Garuda was the emblem of the Gupta emperors, the ardent devotees of Vishnu and is found on gold, silver and copper coins of the Guptas. As Samudragupta had already annexed eastern Malwa it is not improbable that Rama Gupta his elder son occupied the throne after his father. He was soon dethroned by Chandra Gupta II who had improved his image in the eyes of his subjects by defeating the Saka ruler of the western Malwa, Bajpai is right in saying "Looking to the large number of coins of Rama Gupta, and particularly of the *garuda* type from Vidisa and Eran, it appears most likely that this Rama Gupta was none other than the elder brother of Chandra Gupta II¹²⁷".

K.D. Bajpai has discovered three inscribed images of Jain Tirthankaras from Durjanpura, near Vidisa. The Brahmi inscriptions on the pedestals mention *Maharajadhiraja Sri Ramagupta*¹²⁸. The title suggests that this Rama Gupta was a paramount ruler of the Gupta lineage. Thus the inscribed Jain images and a large number of coins found at Vidisa and Eran give sufficient weightage to the historicity of Rama Gupta who seems to have paid allegiance to Jainism.

CHANDRA GUPTA II

Chandra Gupta II ascended the Gupta throne in A.D. 380 or 376. He maintained his control over the entire Bundelkhand. The ins-

criptions of his reign found from Udayagiri hill, near Bhilsa, Sanchi and Gadhawa confirm it.

The major political achievement of Chandra Gupta as borne out of inscriptions of his military chief at Udayagiri hills and from the coins issued by him in imitation of the Saka coins was the subjugation of the Sakas and annexation of their kingdom which extended in western India including Gujarat and Kathiawar to the Gupta empire. An inscription of Virasena, the minister for 'piece and war' of Chandra Gupta, found at Udayagiri hill records that Virasena-Saba, a resident of Pataliputra, accompanied his master to eastern Malwa during the victorious campaign against the Saka ruler Rudrasimha III¹²⁹. The other two inscriptions, one of a Sanakanika Maharaja¹³⁰, a feudatory chief of Chandra Gupta II in the same locality and the other military officer named Amrakardeva, at Sanchi¹³¹, also support the view that Chandra Gupta II had conquered the western Indian region.

While proving the historicity of Rama Gupta Bajpai remarks, "It may be suggested here that the episode leading to the murder of the Saka princes demanding the hand of Rama Gupta's wife Dhrudevi, and later on of Rama Gupta himself by Chandra Gupta II, took place in Eran or Vidisa. It is plausible that Chandra Gupta II made Eran his headquarter to envisage onslaughts against the Saka power in western India. Hence the regions of Bundelkhand formed a part of the Gupta empire during the reign of Chandra Gupta II.

KUMARA GUPTA I

Chandra Gupta II was succeeded by his son and successor, Kumara Gupta I. Some scholars believe that the former was succeeded by Govinda Gupta before the latter¹³². Bhandarkar held that Kumara Gupta is identical with Govinda Gupta¹³³. However, the majority of scholars today do not agree with above views.

Kumara Gupta I, like his father, maintained his hold over the entire regions of Bundelkhand. Several epigraphic records from Mankunwar, Gadhwa, in Allahabad District and Tumain (Tumbavana), near Gwalior, in Madhya Pradesh confirm it. The Tumain

inscription records that prince Ghatotkacha Gupta was the viceroy in the province of Eran (eastern Malwa)¹³⁴.

Gadhwa was a flourishing religious centre during the reign of Kumara Gupta I. The archaeological remains at Gadhwa i.e., sculptures, carved square and round pillars, pillar-capitals and architraves of exquisite workmanship indicate that there existed a large and beautiful temple of Vishnu.

One of the main achievements of the reign of Kumara Gupta I was the performance of an *Asvamedha* sacrifice. There was a temporary political set back to the Gupta supremacy as the Bhitari pillar inscription records that the stability of the Gupta empire was disturbed by the invasion of an enemy, probably Pushyamitras¹³⁵. A tribe called 'Pushyamitra mentioned in the *Vishnu Purana* is said to have lived near the source of the Narmada river¹³⁶. The timely action of the prince Skanda Gupta turned the tables in favour of the Imperial Guptas who inflicted a crushing defeat upon the enemy. It is not yet clearly known as who these Pushyamitras were. A seal bearing the legend *Pusamitas* in early Kushan characters who also found from Bhita¹³⁷.

SKANDA GUPTA

Skanda Gupta ascended the throne in A.D. 455-6, after the death of Kumara Gupta I. R.C. Majumdar, on the basis of certain passages in Bhitari Inscription, suggests that there was a fratricidal war and Skanda Gupta usurped the throne¹³⁸. Ray Chaudhuri on the contrary, believes that Skanda Gupta was the immediate successor of Kumara Gupta I¹³⁹.

It has already been stated that Skanda Gupta rescued his ancestral empire from the Pushyamitras who had become very wealthy and powerful. Another hostile power which Skanda Gupta had to face were the Hunas who seem to have invaded his territories sometime during A.D. 458. Here again, Skanda Gupta came out victorious and thereby kept his territories intact. Thus Bundelkhand formed an integral part of the Gupta empire right from the period of Samudra Gupta to Skanda Gupta.

Chief in
HUNA INVASIONS

SkandGupta dedniai A.D. 467. He had maintained the territorial boundaries of the Gupta empire intact. However, this situation could not continue for a long time. The constant wars with internal and external enemies affected the royal exchequer adversely. The dissension amongst the members of the ruling house weakened the Gupta empire further.

We possess adequate literary and archaeological evidence to prove that Bundelkhand continued to form a part of the Gupta empire during the last quarter of fifth and sixth centuries A.D. The Gadhwa Stone Inscription of the year 148 G.E. suggests that the north eastern parts of Bundelkhand were included in Gupta empire.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, the Eran Stone Pillar Inscription of Budhagupta, dated in 165 G.E. (A.D. 484) shows that the western limits of Bundelkhand were held intact by the Gupta rulers.¹⁴¹ The inscription carved on a pillar in Gupta characters states that in 165 G.E. (A.D. 484-85) Airikina (Eran) was ruled by Surasmichandra, a feudatory of Budha Gupta whose dominions extended between the Yamuna in the north and Narmada in the south. Matrivishu, who served under Surasmichandra, had a brother named Dhanyavishnu. Both the brothers had erected a column in the honour of Lord Vishnu. Thus eastern Malwa formed a part of the dominions of Budha Gupta during the year A.D. 484-85. Dhanyavishnu, after the death of his brother Matrivishnu, transferred his allegiance to the Huna chiefs, Toramana, which would indicate that the region had passed under the political supremacy of the Hunas. The Eran Stone Boar Inscription of Toramana records that Dhanyavishnu erected a stone temple dedicated to Vishnu during the rule of Toramana.¹⁴² The discovery of two seals from excavations of Kaushambi, one bearing the name of Huna chief, Toramana and the other with the legend *Huna-raja*¹⁴³ also corroborates that the whole of Bundelkhand has overrun by the Hunas at the end of fifth century A.D. However, the Huna supremacy was short-lived. A posthumous inscription of Goparaja, dated in the year 191 G.E. found, from Eran informs that Goparaja, who accompanied a powerful king Bhanu Gupta to the battle-field was killed fighting and his wife became a Sati (cremated herself on the funeral pyre of her husband).¹⁴⁴ The battle referred

to above was probably fought against the Huna chief, Toramana, who was then ruling over Central India. Bhanu Gupta in all probability was a scion of the ruling Gupta house and had invaded Eran to oust the foreign usurper from eastern Malwa which was earlier included into the Gupta empire. The ally, Goparaja, was a chief of the Sarabha Kula (or the dynasty of Sarabhapuriyas) who ruled in the Raipur District of Madhya Pradesh. Bhanu Gupta succeeded in ousting the Huna chief from Central India and Bundelkhand and annexing them in Gupta empire during A.D. 510-11.

FEUDATORIES OF THE GUPTAS

The later Gupta kings, like Budha Gupta and Bhanu Gupta made all possible efforts to keep the political boundaries of the Gupta empire intact yet the forces of distintegration were already at work. A number of small principalities emerged in south-eastern parts of Bundelkhand which enjoyed complete autonomy.

The numerous epigraphic records of the Parivrajaka Maharajas reveal that they ruled over a smaller principality in south-eastern parts of Bundelkhand, the so-called Dabhala region which included erstwhile Nagod and Jaso states. The copper plate inscriptions of the family invariably mention the phrase *Gupta-nripa-rajya-bhuktau* which shows that their charters are dated in Gupta era of A.D. 319-20 and they were the feudatories of the Gupta emperors. However, the Bhumara pillar inscription, which records the erection of a *bala-yashiti* during the reign of Maharaja Hastin of the Parivrajaka family and Maharaja Sarvanatha of Uchchakalpa dynasty, does not mention the name of any specific era. This has created controversy. No doubt, the Parivrajaka chiefs were the feudatories and used Gupta era in dating their charters, the Uchchakalpas, said to be the feudatory chiefs of Vakatakas, might not have agreed to the use of an era of a rival power in their joint declaration. Hence, we do not find any specific era mentioned in Bhumara inscription. This theory has been refuted on the plea that the later kings of the Uchchakalpa, viz., Jayanatha and Sarvanatha, have dated their records in Gupta era only.¹⁴⁶ Should they also be treated as the feudatories of the Gupta ruler? J. Dubreuil has identified Vyaghradeva of the Ginja inscription, a feudatory of the

Vakatak king, Prithivishena, with Vyaghra, the father of Uchchakalpa chief, Jayanatha.¹⁴⁶ If this identification is correct, then the Uchchakalpa rulers were the feudatory chiefs of the Vakatakas. How did then the two Uchchakalpa rulers *viz.*, Jayanatha and Sarvanatha date their records in Gupta era? Mirashi has tried to solve this problem by stating, "the crux of the matter seems to be that the earlier Uchchakalpas were feudatories of the Guptas and used the Gupta era in dating their records. Vyaghra, who flourished about A.D. 475, seems to be the first Uchchakalpa who transferred his allegiance to the Vakatakas. His successors Jayanatha and Sarvanatha continued to use the era (Gupta era) which was well established in the country, though they were no more feudatories of the Guptas".¹⁴⁷

The dates of the Parivrajaka Maharaja Hastin range from A.D. 475 to 517. He must have been a contemporary of Uchchakalpa ruler, Sarvanatha, who is mentioned in Bhumara inscription and of Jayanatha and even Vyaghra, the father and grandfather of Sarvanatha. Samkshobha, the son and successor of Hastin, was ruling in the year A.D. 528-29. It is pertinent to note here that the land grants of Hastin do not mention the name of the then Gupta king, Budha Gupta, who was ruling over the north-western regions of Bundelkhand. The general reference to the Gupta sovereignty in his land grants probably shows that Hastin was an independent ruler but accepted the Gupta supremacy for courtesy sake. The Uchchakalpa kings had probably shifted their allegiance to the Vakatakas, right from Vyaghra's time, as suggested by Mirashi.

The Uchchakalpas seem to have derived their names from their capital, Uchchakalpa, probably a small town. The epigraphic records of the family present a genealogy which mentions Oghadeva, Kumara-deva and Jayasvamin as predecessors of Vyaghra of Nachna and Ganja inscriptions.¹⁴⁸ Their territories seem to be lying contiguous to the Parivrajaka kingdom. The family gained importance during the reign of Vyaghra who watched the waning influence of the Guptas and, as a political strategy, shifted his allegiance to the Vakatakas. The land grants of Jayanatha, the successor of Vyaghra, probably refer to the Gupta era but do not contain any reference to the Gupta sovereignty. Hence, in A.D. 493 the Uchchakalpas did not owe any allegiance to

the Guptas and the south-eastern Bundelkhand did not form part of the Gupta empire at the end of fifth century A.D.

In the north-eastern parts of Bundelkhand, a new dynasty called the Panduvamsa gained importance. A rock inscription at Kalanjara in Banda District mentions the name of king Udayana who probably ruled there at the end of fifth century A.D.¹⁴⁹ The territory included some parts of Bundelkhand and Baghelkhand. Another copper plate grant, found in erstwhile Rewa State of Baghelkhand, mentions four kings of the dynasty.¹⁵⁰ The two, Nagabala and Bharatabala, bear the title of *Maharaja* and also the epithets like *Paramamaheswara* and *Paramabrahmanya*. They ruled in the fifth century A.D.

ERA OF UNCERTAINTY

It was the sudden meteor-like rise of Janendra Yasodharman of Mandasor, sometime before A.D. 533, that the western regions of Bundelkhand seem to have been wrested away temporarily from the Gupta dominions. The Mandasor inscription records the greatness of Yasodharman who forced Mihirakula, the Huna king of the Himalayan country, to pay respect to his feet. Yasodharman probably inflicted a crushing defeat on the Huna's chief, Mihirakula, who had once extended his sway upto eastern Malwa. Yasodharman is further described to have conquered the eastern territories of the country as far as the Lauhitya or Brahmaputra river. This proved a shattering blow to the power and prestige of the Guptas whose dominions were now confined to Magadha and its neighbouring areas. However, the success of Yasodharman was transitory and it did not leave any lasting impact on the political conditions of northern India. The Later Guptas regained their hold over eastern Malwa shortly after the storm of Yasodharman had subsided. The *Harsha-charita* of Banabhatta mentions that the Guptas retained their hold over Malwa, probably eastern Malwa, till the time of Prabhakaravardhana of the Pushyabhuti family of Thanesar.¹⁵¹ The Gupta prince, Madhava Gupta of Malwa, referred to by Bana, has been identified with later Gupta king of that name.¹⁵² Hence, his father Mahasena Gupta must have been a ruler of eastern Malwa.

Harshavardhana ascended the throne at the beginning of the

seventh century, A.D. He had carved out an extensive empire for himself yet the regions of Bundelkhand do not seem to have been included within his directly ruled territories. Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, mentions the three states, viz., East Malwa, Gwalior and Bundelkhand which were ruled by the Brahmana Kings.¹⁵³ Nothing more is known about the political history of Bundelkhand of this period. The Brahmana kings were probably replaced by the Rashtrakutas and the Gurjara-Pratiharas.

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2. Pargiter, F.E., *Dynasties of the Kali Age*, 1913, p. 70.
3. *EI*, Vol. XXXI, p. 205.
4. *Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 70.
5. *CII*, I, p. 158.
6. *PHAI*, pp. 311-13.
7. The drama, *Malavikagnimitram*, describes that Agnimitra belonged to Baimbika-Kula (Act IV, verse 14). Bimbika, according to Bharhut inscriptions, was a river (Barua and Sinha, p. 8). It is likely that the house of the Sungas originally emerged from the region where the river, Bimbika was flowing. Hence, they came to be known as Baimbika.
8. *Malavikagnimitram*, IV, 14.
9. *JASB*, 1912, p. 287.
10. *Brih.*, VI, 4, 31.
11. Cunningham, A., *Stupa of Bharhut*, 1962, p. 133.
12. *Malavikagnimitram*, Introduction (Tawney trans.) p. 6. Some manuscripts mention Narmada as the river.
13. Pargiter, F.E., *JRAS*, 1894, p. 260.
14. *ASI*, AR; XXI, pp. 22-23.
15. *IHQ*, I, p. 215.
16. *IA*, 1872, p. 300.
17. According to the drama *Malavikagnimitram* of Kalidasa, this conflict took place in connection with the horse-sacrifice of Pushyamitra when his troops, escorting the horse under Vasumitra, were stopped by the Yavanas on the bank of River Sindhu.
18. *PHAI*, p. 388.
19. *Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 96.
20. *JRAS*, 1963, pt. I & II, p. 13.

21. *IA*, I, p. 300.
 22. The readings in some of the manuscripts of Puranas refer that Pushyamitra had eight sons and ruled along with them for some period. *JNSI*, Vol. IV, 1942, p. 16.
 23. Similarly, Eran stone inscription of Saka Sridharavarman, dated in Regnal year 27, equivalent to 4th c A.D., further shows that the Sakas still held sway over eastern Malwa, *CII*, XI, pt. 2, p. 605.
 24. *Op. cit.*, Bajpai, K.D., 1976, p. 39.
 25. *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 512.
 26. *Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 393.
- The name of Jyesthamitra is found to occur in certain Brahmi inscriptions discovered at Kosam.
27. Jayaswal held that Odraka was the paramount Sunga king of Vidisa. However, there is no concrete proof for this as there is no honorific title before the name of Udaka of Pabhosa inscription.
 28. Marshall, J.H., *A guide to Sanchi*, 1936, p. 11.
 29. Bajpai holds that the King Brahmaspatimitra, whose coins have been abundantly found from Kaushambi, is no other than Brihaspatimitra of Kharavela's inscription. Brihaspatimitra of Kharavela's inscription is also termed as, 'Magadharaja'. According to Prof. Bajpai, the region of Magadha had come under the Sunga-house of Kaushambi during 1st c B.C., *INS*, p. 39.
 30. Allan, J.B.M.C. Introduction, pp. XCVI-XCVIII, pp. 150-154.
 31. *JNSI*, I, pp. 1-16, 133-145.
 32. *Op. cit.*, Bajpai, K.D., 1976, p. 42.
 33. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
 34. Barua and Sinha, *Bharhut Inscriptions*, pp. 1-3; 30, 31.
 35. Cunningham, A., *Stupa of Bharhut*, 1962, pp. 16, 130.
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
 37. *IA*, 1877, p. 339.
 38. *JNSI*, Vol. IV, Pt. II, p. 137.
 39. *Ibid.*, 1942, p. 6.
 40. *IC*, Vol. I, p. 694.
 41. *JNSI*, Vol. IV, 1942, p. 7.
 42. *Op. cit.*, Marshall, J.H., 1936, p. 13.
 43. Prof. Altekar considered Vavaghosha as a ruler of Kaushambi, ruling sometimes in 200 B.C. *JNSI*, Vol. IV, Pt. I, p. 3.
 44. *JNSI*, Vol. XXIV (1962), p. 137.
 45. *PHAI*, p. 473.
 46. *EI*, XXIV, 1937-38, p. 210.

The inscription dated in the 2nd year of Maharaja Kanishka, mentions the erection of a Bodhisattva Statue by the nun, Buddhamitra at the promenade of the Buddha.

47. Sharma, G.R., *Kushan Studies*, 1968, p. 45.
48. Ray Chaudhari says "As the Sanchi images may have been brought from Mathura, the find spots need not be regarded as forming necessarily a part of the empire of the King mentioned on the pedestals". *PHAI*, p. 476, fn. 4.
49. *ASI*, AR, 1911-1912, pp. 63-65.
 The coins of Kadphasis II, Kanishka, and Huvishka from Bhita need not necessarily suggest the extent of Kushan empire. These coins might have come there by way of trade or through pilgrims or travellers.
50. *Op. cit.*, Sharma, G.R., 1968, p. 45.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.
52. (a) Gupta, P.L., "Papers on the Date of Kanishka" ed. A.L. Basham, p. 116.
 (b) *Op. cit.*, Bajpai, K.D., 1976, pp. 1-18.
53. *Op. cit.*, Pargiter, F.E., 1913, p. 51.
54. Shastri, A.M., *Kaushambi Hoard of Magha coins*, 1979, p. 20.
55. Prof. Altekar believes that the Maghas in their heyday glory ruled over wide territories extending from Bilaspur in the south to Fatehpur in Uttar Pradesh. *JGJRI*, I, p. 159.
56. *ASI*, AR, 1911-12, p. 51.
57. (i) Ginja hill inscription of Maharaja Bhimasena (year 52) *EI*, Vol. III, p. 306.
 (ii) Kosam Inscriptions of Maharaja Bhadramagha of the years 81, 83, 86 and 87.
 (a) *EI*, Vol. XXIV, pp. 253 to 56.
 (b) Negi, J.S., *Some Indological Studies*, p. 64. Another, inscription dated in the year 83 in which ruler's name is lost is noticed by Prof. Negi.
 (c) *EI*, XVIII, p. 160. Dr. Sahni read the date as 88, D.C. Sircar corrects it as 86.
 (d) Sircar, D.C., *Select Inscriptions*, I, p. 163.
 (e) *Jha Commemoration Volume*, pp. 101-14.
 (iii) Shastri, A.M., *Kaushambi, Hoard of Magha Coins*, p. 20.
 (iv) Prof. Altekar believes that the Maghas in their heyday glory ruled over wide territories extending from Bilaspur in the south to Fatehpur in Uttar Pradesh.
 (v) An. Report, *ASI*, 1911-12, p. 51.
 (iv) Allahabad Museum (Kosam) inscriptions of Maharaja Bhadramagha (year 87) *EI*, Vol. XXIII, p. 245.
 (vii) Kosam Inscription of Maharaja Bhadramagha (year 86) *EI*, Vol. XVIII, p. 245.
 (viii) Kosam Inscription of Maharaja Vaisravana (year 107) *EI*, XXIV, p. 146. A fragmentary inscription of this ruler is housed in Allahabad Museum, Reg. No. 1/6.

Historical Background

- (ix) Kosam Inscription of Maharaj Sivamagha (date lost) *EI*, XVIII, p. 159.
- (x) Kosam Inscription of Maharaja Bhimavarman. It is preserved in the University Museum of Allahabad (year 122) (Negi, J.S., *Some Indological Studies*, p. 70).
- (xi) Kosam Inscription of Maharaja Bhimavarman (year 130), *Ind. Cul.*, Vol. III, p. 177.
- (xii) Kosam Ins. of Maharaja Bhimavarman (year 139), *CII*, Vol. III, p. 266.
- 58. *EI*, XXXI, p. 177; pp. 182-183.
- 59. *JNSI*, Vol. II, p. 99.
- 60. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
- 61. *EI*, XXXI, p. 184.
- 62. *Ibid.*, pp. 185-86.
- 63. *ASI*, AR, 1911-12, p. 66.
- 64. *Op. cit.*, Allan, 1936, pp. 157-58.
- 65. *JNSI*, II, pp. 95-108, Pl. IX.
- 66. *Ibid.*, XXXVIII (i), p. 48.
- 67. *EI*, XVIII, 1925-26, p. 160.
- 68. *CII*, III, p. 266.
- 69. Bhandarkar, D.R., "List of Inscriptions of Northern India" Appendix, *EI*, XIX-XXIII, p. 173.
- 70. Jayaswal, K.P., *History of India*, 1933, p. 229.
- 71. *EI*, XXIV, p. 147.
- 72. *IC*, I, p. 715; Vol. III, p. 179.
- 73. *EI*, XXIV, p. 255.
- 74. *JNSI*, II, pp. 103-104.
- 75. *EI*, XXVI, p. 297; *op. cit.*, Mirashi, V.V., 1960-64, I, p. 152.
- 76. *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 175.
- 77. *EI*, XXXI, pp. 173-76.
- 78. Altekar, A.S., (ed). *The Vakataka Gupta Age*, 1946, p. 41, Note 2.
- 79. *Op. cit.*, Bajpai, K.D., 1976, p. 11.
- 80. *Op. cit.*, Shastri, A.M., 1979, p. 23.
- 81. *ASI*, A.R. 1911-12, p. 51.
- 82. *EI*, III, p. 306; Vol. XXXI, p. 177.
- 83. *Op. cit.*, Bhandarkar, D.R., p. 173.
- 84. *IC*, III, pp. 179, 180-81.
- 85. *Op. cit.*, Shastri, A.M., 1979, p. 24.
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(b) *Op. cit.*, Altekar, A.S., 1946, p. 42.
- 87. *Op. cit.*, Shastri, A.M., 1979, p. 35, fn. 71.
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- 89. *Op. cit.*, Mirashi, V.V., 1960-64, I, pp. 155-56.
- 90. *JNSI*, XXIII, p. 412, No. 12.

91. *EI*, XVIII, p. 159.
92. *Ibid.*, XXXI, pp. 182-83.
93. *Ibid.*
94. *Ibid.*, pp. 185-86.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
96. *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 176.
97. *Op. cit.*, Shastri, A.M., 1979, p. 11.
98. Sivamagha II of the coins has been identified with Gautamputra Sivamagha, whose sealings have been discovered at Bhita. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
99. (a) *Op. cit.*, Negi, J.S., 1966, p. 70.
(b) *IC*, III, p. 182.
(c) *CII*, III, p. 266.
100. *Op. cit.*, Chattopadhyaya, S., 1958, p. 142.
101. *JASB*, Vol. 64, pt. I, 1895, p. 159.
102. *Op. cit.*, Bajpai, K.D., 1976, pp. 124, 139, 146-47.
103. *Op. cit.*, Cunningham, A., 1962, p. 139.
104. *Op. cit.*, Bajpai, K.D., 1976, p. 23.
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106. *Op. cit.*, Shastri, A.M., 1979, p. 30.
107. *PHAI*, p. 530.
108. *Op. cit.*, Shastri, A.M., 1979, p. 31.
109. Bajpai contends that Kaushambi continued to maintain her independent status upto the middle of the 4th c A.D., when it was conquered and annexed by Samudragupta to his empire, *INS*, p. 43.
110. *Op. cit.*, Mirashi, V.V., 1960-64, I, p. 165.
111. *Op. cit.*, Bajpai, K.D., 1976, p. 43.
112. *EI*, XXVI, p. 304.
113. Fleet, J.F., *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and their Successors*, *CII*, III, p. 18, No. 2.
114. *PHAI*, p. 538.
115. *CII*, III, p. 233.
116. *EI*, XVII, p. 12.
117. *PHAI*, p. 538.
118. *IA*, LV, p. 225.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
120. *EI*, XXIII, p. 172.
121. See Altekar, A.S., *JBORS*, XIV, p. 223 & XV, p. 133;
(b) Jayaswal, K.P. *JBORS*, XVIII, 17.
(c) Mirashi, V.V., *IHQ*, X, p. 48.
122. *PHAI*, p. 533, fn. 2.
123. *The classical Age*, p. 18.
124. *JNSI*, 1950, Vol. XII, pt. II, pp. 103-6, pl. IX, 1-6.

125. *Ibid.*, 1951, Vol. XIII, pt. II, pp. 128-130, pl. VIII, 1-9.
126. *Ibid.*, XIII, pp. 341-42, pl. X, 5-12.
127. *Op. cit.*, Bajpai, K.D., 1976, p. 134.
128. (a) *Ibid.*, p. 122.
(b) D.C. Sircar, however considers Ramagupta to be a local chief who issued coins in imitation of the Imperial Gupta money on the decline of the Guptas, *JIH*, Vol. XL (1962) pp. 533-36.
129. *Op. cit.*, Fleet, J.F., *CII*, No. 6, p. 35.
130. *Ibid.*, No. 3, p. 25.
131. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
132. Jagannath held that Chandra Gupta was succeeded by Govinda-Gupta, which does not seem to be tenable *IC*, XII, p. 167.
133. *IC*, XI, p. 231.
134. *EI*, XXVI, p. 115.
135. Fleet had read the word, as Pushyamitra (*CII*, III, pp. 54-55) However, Dr. H.R. Divekar interpreted it simply as adversary. (*ABORI*, I. 99).
136. *Vish.* IV, 24, 17. Wilson, IX, p. 213.
137. *JRAS*, 1911, p. 188.
138. *JRASB*: 1921, XVII, p. 253.
139. *PHAI*. pp. 272-7.
140. *ASI*, X. p. 11.
141. *CII*, III, p. 68; *JASB*; VII, p. 633.
142. *Ibid.*, p. 158.
143. *Op. cit.*, Sharma, G.R., 1960, p. 16.
144. *CII*, III, p. 91.
145. *IA*, LV, p. 222.
146. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
147. *EI*; XVIII, p. 171.
148. (a) *CII*, III, p. 223.
(b) *EI*, XVII, p.12.
149. *EI*, IV, p. 257.
150. *Ibid.*, XXVII, p. 132.
151. The two Gupta princes, Kumaragupta and Madhavagupta, who were appointed to wait upon Rajyavardhana and Harshavardhana, are mentioned by Bana as sons of the king of Malwa.
152. *PHAI*, p. 609.
153. Watters, T., *On Yuan Chwang's Travel in India*, II, 1904-5, p. 250.

3

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

The social conditions of the early period of Bundelkhand can be inferred from the so-far known epigraphic records, archaeological data and the contemporary literature. The information howsoever inadequate and sketchy, certainly helps us in framing the broad outlines of the social structure of the region. The dry and arid land, lack of irrigation facilities and the hilly tract have been detrimental to the economic growth throughout. Except the sub-tracts of the rivers Narmada, Sindh, Betwa, Ken and Son, which provide irrigation and navigable facilities to some extent, the major parts suffer from poor economic growth. It was on the banks of these rivers that the urban centres sprang up, the inhabitants in such areas gave birth to the urban culture whereas the rest of the population lived a village life, devoid of material comforts and sophistication. So there was a gap between the life of affluent royal class, nobility and the business community of the trading centres like Kaushambi, Bhita, Eran and Tripuri and the remaining bulk of population dwelling in the undeveloped rural areas. It is of vital importance to keep this factor of socio-economic background in view while studying the early social structure of the region. It is for this simple reason that the great Maurya emperor, Asoka on and often, emphasises this social gap when he announces in his Gujarra and Rupanath Rock-edicts that both the rich and poor classes of the society can equally benefit from the Dharma.¹

The society, as a whole, was divided into four *varnas*, viz., the *Brahmin*, *Kshtriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*. We get ample evidences in epigraphic records and the contemporary literature about the existence of these four sections. However, the rigidity of the caste system had not yet fully developed. There are inscriptional references to various

groups which followed their hereditary professions and formed their guilds to look after their interests. We do not, however, have positive evidence to conclude that these professional groups had fallen into the rigidity of the later caste system.

The Brahmins enjoyed certain privileges in the society for their learning and simple but chaste living. They lived in *agraharas* or villages inhabited by the learned Brahmins only. The Pali Copper Plate Grant records the gift of an *agrahara* by Maharaja Lakshman to the Brahmin Revatisvamin of *Kautsigotra*.² The Kshatriyas held regal power and occupied a respectable position. The business Community, the Vaishyas, took up to trade, agriculture and cattle breeding. They had somewhat inferior social status as compared to the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. Yet they formed an important section and, were the major source of income to the royal exchequer. The Shudras were treated with disregard and contempt. They served the other three *varnas* with their manual labour. They were not permitted to study the Brahmanical scriptures and even to mingle with other higher sections of the society. The sin of untouchability, a slur on the Hindu society, had drawn deep roots in the society.

There are literary references to show that the *Chandalas* were the lowest section of the society during the Sunga age. They were treated as outcasts and people of higher classes did not like to meet them or even touch them. Barua has identified a sculptured panel in one of the coping stones from Bharhut with the story from Pali literature wherein king Asoka, his nephew Nigrodha and his preceptor Tissa were born in their previous birth as three brothers dealing in honey business.³ When the younger brother made a gift of honey to a mendicant, the elder one got displeased and remarked that the gift was made to a *chandala* who usually put on yellow robes⁴.

A large number of *Grihya Sutras*, *Dharma Sutras*, and the *Smritis*, prescribing the duties and social norms of the various *varnas* and thereby moulding the Hindu society into a stereotyped structure, had been composed. All such literature of the earlier part of the period grants invariably special privilege and social supremacy to the Brahmanas in the name of learning and high character. They provided the constitution of the State, framed the social laws, held positions in

controlling the affairs of a State and supervised the social and religious rites of the people. This led to a major class conflict between the priestly class, the Brahmanas and the ruling section, *i.e.*, the Kshatriyas and gave birth to Buddhism and Jainism, revolting against the Brahmanical domination.

Thus, the Indian society of the Mauryan era was split into two major divisions, the one following the Brahmanical order and the other revolting against it. This clear-cut division of the society on sectarian grounds has been reflected through the varying concepts, philosophy and rituals of the people of this age. Further, the social habits, customs, traits and traditions of the people of Bundelkhand at large were governed by social, regional, climatic and ethnic factors as well. For example, the hilly character of the land provided ideal shelters for numerous tribes with less social reforms and development, whereas the river-beds and navigable parts of major rivers gave a boost to the fertility of soil resulting in surplus production and rich trade activity. This is why, we find affluent traders like Anathapindikā, who could cover the entire patch of land of a garden with gold coins on one hand and the poverty stricken common folk of villages on the other.

There is hardly any literary or archaeological evidence to throw light on the social structure of Bundelkhand prior to the rule of the Sungas. The edicts of Asoka merely hint at the upper and lower sections of the society.⁵ Epigraphic records of the Sunga period mention the names of certain tribes and *gotras* of Bharhut and its richly carved railings and the gateways provide valuable clues through its short inscriptions and sculptural panels to understand the broad framework of the social structure of the latter phase of the Sunga period. Similarly, innumerable *Jataka* stories reflected through the Bharhut sculptures, probably borrowed from the contemporary Buddhist literature, throw a flood of light on the existing society. It is interesting to note that in the epigraphic data of the period the caste names are not mentioned. The terms *Deva*, *Datta*, *Mitra*, *Dikshita*, *Rakshita*, *Palita*, etc., of the Bharhut inscriptions are the names of individual donors and not their surnames. It is thus obvious that the caste system in its present sense of the term had not yet fully evolved.

We do get references to the names of certain *gotras* prefixed before the names of individuals e.g., the *Gargeya*, *Kautsa* and *Vatsa* are prefixed with the names of some queens of the Eastern Gateway Pillar inscription.⁶ All these queens with different *gotra* names were married to the members of one and the same family. Hence, it can be inferred that the marriages were arranged amongst families with different *gotras*.⁷ It is again clear from the Buddhist literature that the idea of caste system was gradually developing based on organisations like guilds, following different arts and crafts. The members of each such group preferred to marry within their community and looked after each other's interests. Inter-marriages amongst different professions were held which resulted in mixed castes and sub-castes. "It appears from what has been said above that the Hindu society became something like a federation of castes and sub-castes, whose members did sometimes inter-marry, more frequently in earlier than in later ages, but which nevertheless retained their separate identity".⁸

With the dawn of the Christian era the north-western frontiers of India were thrown open to foreign tribes, who had occupied the north-western and western parts of the country. We come across numerous early epigraphic evidences wherein the foreigners like the Kushanas and Sakas are said to have overran the regions of Kaushambi, Bhita and western Malwa⁹. The presence of the foreign tribes on the borderlands of the Bundelkhand must have influenced the social and cultural life of the people in general. A large number of sculptured panels from Bharhut, Sanchi and Vidisa and so also the excavated material from Kaushambi, Bhita and Eran testify it. Later the Hunas plundered the prosperity of the major parts of the region and made Eran as their stronghold. Such a long and continuous foreign intrusion in Bundelkhand must have brought in a considerable change in outlook of the people and their social behaviour. A large number of foreign intruders got settled in India and adopted indigenous names, sectarian practices and the general traits of the Indian society. The Vidisa Pillar inscription tells us that Heliodoros, a native of Taxila, came as an ambassador of Maharaja Antialkidas, the Indo-Bactrian ruler, to the court of the Indian king Kasiputra Bhagabhadra of Vidisa. The ambassador not only professed the *Bhagavata* religion

but got constructed a *Garuda-dhvaja* also in honour of Vasudeva (Krishna), the God of gods. The fusion of foreign elements in Indian society influenced the dress, ornaments and mode of royalty, etc.

MIXED CASTES

During the supremacy of the Guptas in north India, the political stability and material prosperity of the region had considerably improved. Science and technology, trade and industry and so also indigenous arts and crafts received great impetus. A large number of specialised groups emerged within each guild. The members of such specialised groups owed special allegiance towards their guild and their inter-marriages with the members of different groups within the said guild resulted in many mixed castes. The members of each craft or profession started segregating themselves from the rest of the society by mixing and marrying within their own groups or caste. Violation to these rules by marrying in different *varnas* and guilds gave rise to various *Anuloma* and *Pratiloma* marriages, where people of different castes started inter-marrying amongst themselves on account of the similarity of profession. This is why we come across with many castes during the Gupta period.

POSITION OF WOMEN

Prior to the Christian era the ladies of all classes enjoyed greater amount of freedom. The depiction of ladies in a large number at Bharhut and Sanchi suggests a better social status and liberty. The queens accompanied their royal counterparts whenever they went on tour. On one such occasion Charu the favourite queen of emperor Asoka made a pious gift to the Buddhist clergy of Kaushambi.¹⁰ The ladies enjoyed greater freedom in matters of religion. A large number of female names are inscribed on the Bharhut *Stupa* where they might have gone to make their religious offerings. Sarpā Gupta, Soma, Naga Deva, etc., made their gifts at Bharhut.¹¹ The famous dated Mathura Buddhas found at Kaushambi and Sarnath are the gifts of the Buddhist nuns.

The ladies of the Maurya and Sunga periods did not observe *Purdah* (Veil). The female figures carved at Bharhut and on the

Sunga terracottas are with minimum drapery, looking almost half-naked.

There is little evidence to show whether the women of the early Christian era received formal education. The larger number of Buddhist nuns were conversant with the Buddhist religion and philosophy e.g. Buddhmitra, who made a gift of the statue of Buddha at Kaushambi in the 2nd regnal year of Kanishka, well-versed with the *Tripitaka*¹² "She must have been a very respected and highly qualified lady as her name occurs in Sarnath inscription of the 3rd regnal year of Kanishka as well as the Mathura image inscription of Huvishka of the year thirty-three. Hence, it can very well be inferred that the ladies of the higher castes, if not all, received formal education. However, the ladies were mostly trained in household crafts and so also in fine-arts, as mentioned by Vatsyayana in the *Kamasutra*.¹³ Banabhatta informs the princess Rajyasri "gradully grew up in daily increasing familiarity with friends experts in song, dance, etc., with all accomplishments".¹⁴

The great emphasis was laid on the chastity of women which resulted in early marriages of the girls. A married women was supposed to be dedicated to her husband. There are references, both archaeological and literary, to show that the ladies sacrificed themselves on their husbands' pyre.¹⁵ The Eran Posthumous stone pillar inscription, datable to circa A.D. 510-11 mentions that when Guparaja, the feudatory chief of Bhanugupta, was killed in the battlefield, his wife became Sati. Even Rajyasri, the sister of Harsha, tried to throw herself on the funeral pyre of her husband, Grahavarman, killed by the lord of Malwa.¹⁶

As evident from the contemporary literature, the courtesans were held in high esteem on account of their graceful charms, manners and accomplishments. In one of the carved panels from Bharhut, several ladies are shown dancing in the company of musical instrument players.¹⁷ These dancing figures probably represent the courtesans of the Sunga period.

FOOD AND DRINKS

The different kinds of rice, wheat, barley, pulses and oil seeds

are mentioned in the literature of the period under review. The wheat and boiled rice were the favourite food in the Bundelkhand region. The milk, curd, butter-milk and *ghee* were commonly in vogue. The trees laden with fruits in the carved panels from Bharhut suggest that the fruits were in great use. The sweets were also taken along with the meals. *Saktu (sattu)* was a ready-made dish offered to the guests.¹⁸ It was made of barley.

The non-vegetarian food was common with all sections of the society. Asoka's royal charter to permit the slaughter of particular birds and animals on fixed days, hint, that the people were fond of non-vegetarian dishes.

People enjoyed wine in the company of their spouses. A number of the Bacchanalian scenes in the sculptural reliefs from Sanchi, Mathura and other places suggest that the drinking was in fashion during the Sunga, Kushan and Gupta periods.

DRESS AND ORNAMENTS

The terracottas of the Maurya and Sunga age and the sculptures on the panels of the Bharhut *stupa* provide a very valuable evidence about the dress and ornaments worn by the men and women of the Bundelkhand region. The figures at Bharhut exhibit two types of drapery, the one used by the royal class and the other worn by the common folk. The male figure worshipping the Bodhi Tree on the right of the lowest architrave of Bharhut *torana* has been identified by Barua as the king Dhanabhuti, the builder of the Gateway.¹⁹ He wears a long thick coat with a costly scarf over it, the ends of which are beautifully hanging on his back. Similar coat is worn by another male figure, identified by Barua as Mihira, the Sun God of Uttara-patha.²⁰ Here the coat with full sleeves, reaching nearly to the mid-thigh, shows the open sides. The front portion is tied by cords at two places. The things are covered with a *dhoti* which again is tied with a hanging *patka*. He also wears high boots. Such a dress for the nobility might have been adopted after an alien tradition as the Indians during that period did not use stitched clothes. The fashion of wearing a coat had come into vogue in the Bundelkhand region at an early date. It is

further confirmed by a terracotta figure from Bhita with a man wearing a sleeved coat like the modern *chugha* which is open and is provided with a loop and knot to fasten it across the chest,²¹ the upper body is covered with a big scarf folded in multiple pleats.

The dress of the common folk, as per the reliefs of Bharhut, comprised a plain loin-cloth or *dhoti* around the waist and gathered in front to pass between the legs and tucked behind. It reaches down to the ankles, covering both the thighs. A *kamarband* or *pheta* was tied around the waist to hold the *dhoti* in its place. Sometimes the *kamarband* exhibited a bow-shaped knot in the front with a loop hanging on one side and the two free ends on the other.

The portion above the waist is invariably left bare. A light scarf (*uttariya*) alone covering both the shoulders and passing through the armpits, is seen falling on the elbows. Sometimes one end of the scarf was hung in front and the other thrown at the back. Even both ends of the scarf are thrown at the back at times.

The head dress or turban is the speciality of the Sunga drapery. The turban was of two types, the one made of light scarf that crossed above the forehead and tightened the hair which were gathered in a top-knot on the right side of the head. Thus, the light turban left much of the plaited hair exposed. The heavier type, however, covered the whole head by winding the pleats around.

The lower dress of the females, as noticed from the sculptured panels at Bharhut, is somewhat similar to that of the men. The *dhoti* or the *sari* reaches very little below the knees and the outer edge is gathered together in a continuous succession of equal sized stiff and formal folds. Even today, the ladies working in the fields wear a *dhoti* with an elaborate, beaded girdle, which is sometimes embroidered.²² The *patka* or the ornamental cloth was suspended with the girdle and was kept hanging in between the feet in a zig-zag way.²³

The upper part of the female figures in Bharhut reliefs is mostly devoid of clothing. The ladies of the upper class probably wore an *orhani* decorated with beautiful borders. It was simply a piece of cloth covering the head in a form of veil and falling backwards over the shoulders down to the waist.²⁴

The hair, parted in the middle, always appear just under the

front edge of the veil. The mass of the hair of the ladies is gathered together at the back and plaited into one or two long braids which hang down as low as the waist or twisted and tied into a large knot.

The men and women of the Gupta period, on the other hand, were fond of beautiful, long and soft hair, as revealed from the sculptures and the terracotta figures. The curled hair (*alaka*) and the curly ringlets (*curnakuntala*) are represented, the latter probably being the more favourite manner of dressing the hair.

The mode of dressing, both for male and female, had undergone a major change during the later period. The foreign tribes i.e., the Sakas, Indo-Parthians and Kushans introduced new types of costume. The stitched garments to cover the entire body had come into vogue. The Kushan kings on their coins are shown wearing trousers, long coat and high boots. These came into fashion with the later Indian royalty. The ladies too preferred the stitched garments like the blouses and bodice in imitation of the Greeks and Scythians.

The sewing had become an important household craft to be taught to the ladies of the Gupta age. Both the literary and archaeological records testify the high taste of people wearing a variety of costumes made of thin and transparent cloth. The sculptures from Koshambi, Bhita, Deogarh, Bhumara, Garhwa and Eran, etc., throw ample light on the variety of costumes and the textile materials. A *dhoti* stretching upto the knees and a long, thin and transparent scarf, probably made of intricately woven muslin cloth held on the upper part of the body, was the common drapery of the people in Bundelkhand region. The *dhoti* of the male figures at Garhwa is shown just as a short apparel fastened at the waist with a *kamarband* or *pheta* tied in a low-shaped knot with a loop hanging on one side and the two free ends of the *kamarband* on the other. A scene carved on a lintel excavated from Pawaya, the ancient Padmavati and the capital of the Naga kings of Bundelkhand, shows a lady dancer wearing a regional dress a *sari*, reachings the ankles, with the pleated end tucked in behind.²⁵ Even today the ladies of the Bundelkhand region wear the *sari* in similar fashion. The breasts of the lady are covered with a scarf knotted near the left shoulder. The lady musicians are also wearing bodices tied in front.²⁶ In the Shiva-Parvati panel from Kosam, now

in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, the *dhoti* is lowered down upto the ankles. The right end of the *dhoti* of Shiva is folded into pleats. Parvati wears a nicely creased *patka*, attached to the waist-girdle and falling in front between the two legs. Both the figures carry a long scarf with one end hanging from the left shoulder and the other passing round the body and falling on elbow of the left hand. The upward raised hair of Shiva is fastened with a ribbon in the middle, allowing the upper locks to fall behind. The head of Parvati is adorned with a peculiar head-gear, probably made of wool or some other material which is woven to form a cap with side scroll motifs. Thus the head-gear seems to have been used both by the male and female. The head-dress of the Mankuwar Buddha is just a folded plain cloth tightly wrapped round the head.

The stitched garments were also popular. In the reliefs of the Bhumara temple, as cited by Moti Chandra, the dancers and musicians are shown wearing embroidered coats, trousers, jackets and caps of the varying forms.²⁷

ORNAMENTS

A close scrutiny of the terracottas and sculptures suggests that the ornaments were in great demand right from the Mauryan period. The bas reliefs from Bharhut exhibit a variety of ornaments worn by the male and female. The ear-rings, necklaces, armlets and bracelets were commonly used by men and women of the Sunga age. However, the ladies alone are shown wearing the forehead ornaments, girdles and anklets. The necklaces and girdles appear to have made of beaded strings of various shapes and sizes. The nose ring had not yet come into vogue.

The ornaments were often made of the beads of precious and semi-precious stones, ivory and glass. The seeds of plant (*ratti*) were interlaced and worn as the necklaces, armlets and girdles. Those made of precious metals like gold were used by the wealthy persons. The excavations at Bhita have yielded numerous ornaments of gold e.g., the hollow beads, rings, flat wheel with axel and discs with embossed human figures, etc.²⁸ These find confirm that the art of jewellery was well in vogue during the early centuries of the Christian era.

It is interesting to note that the forms of ornaments and their mode of wearing have not changed in the Bundelkhand region even after a period of two thousand years. A star-shaped ornament worn by the ladies on the forehead just below the parting of the hair appears to be the most common variety. This was made of a gold-leaf and stuck on the forehead. In the contemporary Sanskrit literature, this is called *lalatika*²⁹ (the forehead piece). This ornament is common even today and is known as *benda*.

The ear-rings were used by the male and female. A variety of ear-rings, noted from the Bharhut bas-reliefs, are shaped as rings, flowers and *Triratna* motifs. A special kind of ear-rings, very commonly worn by the male and female at Bharhut and Sanchi, consist of a square plaque in front to which a projection with two spiral turns is attached at the back. It was worn in the ear-lobes. The front portion is adorned with a four-petalled flower. Agrawala has identified it as *Prakaravapra kundala* of the Sanskrit literature.³⁰

The bas-reliefs of Bharhut depict two main types of necklaces : one short and broad and the other long and composed of three, five or seven strings of beads with a predominant gem in the centre. The central gem is often shaped as *Triratna* symbol. The armlets or bracelets, used by men and woman alike, are formed of beads, probably of gold and precious stones or semi-precious stones. These consist of spirals of ten coils each, with a jewelled plate on the outside of the wrist. The inner side has a curious arrangement of four perpendicular wires attached to a loop for keeping the spiral closed.³¹

The most popular lady ornament of Sunga period was an elaborate *mekhala* or girdle composed of several rows of the bead-strings. Cunningham believes that this might have originally been made of brilliant red seeds, popularly known as *ratti* or *rattika* in Bundelkhand.³² The affluent class must have used the beads of gold or semi-precious stones. The anklets from the Bharhut sculptures are of two types : one is formed of spiral coils, piled one over the other, the other is simply the row of chains or bells producing tinkling sound at the time of walking. These anklets are still in use.

The ornaments of Sunga age were produced by the filigree technique wherein the thin metallic wires were soldered together to hold beads and plaques of precious metals or stones. The art of jewellery progressed during the Gupta era. New forms of ear-rings, necklaces and bracelets are found in the Gupta sculptures. Amongst men *ekavali*, the necklace of single string, was very popular. The ladies necklaces of pearls and gems passed through the breasts and touched the navel. The head-gears of kings and queens had developed into amazing forms. The contemporary Sanskrit literature gives several names to all such ornaments. The technical skill in metallurgy and gemmology and so also the abundance of precious metals and gems gave impetus to the art of jewellery, as it is evident from the archaeological and literary evidences.

Cunningham has described the traits and traditions of men and women of Bundelkhand during the Sunga age. Accordingly, the art of tattooing was a popular mode of decoration with the ladies of Bharhut, as the female faces invariably exhibit the traces of tattoo marks, forming interesting motifs and designs.³³ The art of tattooing, popularly known as *godana*, is still very much practised.

RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS

Prior to the Mauryan era the houses were generally built of mud and wood. The excavations at Bhita show that the kiln-burnt bricks came into use in *circa* 400 B.C.³⁴ These were used during the Mauryan period. The general plan of the houses consisted of a central courtyard enclosed by a row of rooms on the four sides.³⁵

Cunningham, on the basis of sculptured panels at Bharhut, suggested that the houses of the Sunga period consisted generally of three or four rooms with either a pointed or semi-cylindrical domed-roof and a small opening in each gable to give air and light.³⁶ The walls of unbaked bricks or sun-dried were made. The roofs were thatched.

The houses of later periods were built of kiln-burnt bricks, the *kachcha* bricks being reserved for foundation purposes. The blocks of stone fitted with massive iron rings were probably used as sockets for

fixing doors at the entrances. In subsequent period the people constructed multi-storeyed houses with an open terrace.

TRANSPORT

Many modes of transport for men and goods were used. A number of scenes in the bas-reliefs of Bharhut show the royal personages riding on elephants and horses. The bullock-carts were the main vehicles and the common means of transport. A large number of toy-carts (*mrichchhakatika*) of baked clay have been found from the ancient sites of Kosam and Bhita. The bullock-cart depicted to carry the gold coins to the Jetavana Garden was probably the common variety and the one carved in one of the medallions of the rail bars, appears to have been used by the rich as it has wooden sides, back and a wooden canopy to protect the passengers from heat and rains. Both these varieties of two-wheeled bullock-carts were drawn by two bullocks in the same fashion as we find today.

The kings and nobles used horse-driven chariots. The chariot of king Prasenjit had a majestic look with ornamented front and lower sides. It was two-wheeled and was drawn by four horses with plumes on their heads. The manes of the horses were well arranged and their tails tied up on one side in order to prevent whisking. It may be noted that they have the bridle but no saddle.

The boats were used to carry men and material through water. The boats of Bharhut had planks attached on their edges to prevent their sliding and were fastened together by iron clamps. The spoon-shaped oars had long bamboo handles with flat terminals.³⁷

The means of transport and their forms have not changed and are still being used in the region under reference.

MEANS OF RECREATION

The Asokan edicts speak of the *Samajjas* meaning the religious festivals. There must have been several such fairs and festivals during the Maurya and Sunga times. The dance and music parties were the main source of enjoyment of the people. The Bharhut railing pillars depicting dancing scenes portray women dancing in different poses. In one scene four ladies and a child are dancing with their arms extended.

In the middle and to the left are other eight ladies playing on musical instruments like harp and cymbols. In other places, the drum and conch shells are also exhibited.

The hunting was another important pastime with the nobility of the Sunga age. A number of scenes from Bharhut portray hunters carrying bow and arrows. The archery was practised in all levels of the society. The weapons like the broad-bladed swords and daggers might have also been used for hunting. The *Mig-Jataka* scene at Bharhut depicts the hunter shooting arrows at the deer.³⁸ Hunting with trained dogs was popular. On a medallion at Bharhut a boar is attacked by two dogs. A male or female with a club is standing by the side of the dog.³⁹

The ram fight was a common amusement. In one scene from Bharhut, a man is accompanied by a big fighting ram.⁴⁰ The *Kuttaniamatam*, a treatise of the post-Gupta period, mentions that stout rams were nurtured for this purpose.⁴¹

The gambling was prevalent in the Sunga society. In one scene from Bharhut, four gamblers are playing a square-board game—a kind of dice. The square-board, pieces of dice and a cubical box containing them are clearly shown.⁴²

The acrobatic feats in public was another source of public amusement. A panel on a pillar post from Bharhut in the circular medallion represents a group of nine hanging men, *nine in number*, who hold firmly the feet of one over the other.⁴³ A male and female are on the two sides of the panel.

The wrestling is depicted in a carved panel found from Bharhut. It also decided the superiority between the two opponents. In a carved panel from Gadhwara the duel between Jarasandha and Bhima is depicted in a forceful and realistic manner.⁴⁴

EDUCATION AND LEARNING

There is not much evidence to throw light on the system of education and learning in Bundelkhand during the period under review. The archaeological evidences suggest that the towns, like Kaushambi, Bhita etc., were great centres of the Buddhist learning and philosophy prior to the Christian era. During Asoka, Kaushambi had several

buddhist *viharas* where the monks studied the tenets of early Hinayanism. The renowned Buddhist *acharyas* visited Kaushambi. The Chinese pilgrims Fa-Hien and Hiuen Tsang stayed at Kaushambi to collect and carry home the sacred Buddhist texts.

The *gurukulas* imparted education to pupils who joined them. In one carved panel from Bharhut is a scene wherein the ascetic teacher holds his class. The pupils are seated in the open air under a tree; the male students on their heels and the female students cross-legged. The teacher sits cross-legged on a deer-skin spread over a high seat.⁴⁵ The girls received formal education along with the boys during 2nd-1st centuries B.C.

The teachers in *gurukulas* maintained strict discipline. A carved panel from Mathura, datable to 2nd-1st centuries B.C., shows the teacher admonishing his pupils for their misbehaviour.⁴⁶

The Brahmins studied the Vedic literature, philosophy, logic, grammar, law, ethics, poetics and theology, etc. The mathematics, astrology, astronomy, alchemistry, medicine and other sciences were studied. The Kshatriyas studied politics (*dandaniti*), laws of administration, archery and military science including the operation of the army and use of elephants, chariots and weapons. A prince had also to study history or *itihasa*, *dharmashastras* and *arthashastra*. The Vaishyas had a different course of study. They learnt about the gems, pearls, corals, precious metals, cloth, perfumes, agriculture and the varieties of merchandise. The Buddhist literature prescribes the knowledge of gems, horses and elephants, etc., for the sons of business community. The lower sections of the society received a hereditary training of singing, dancing and practising of various indigenous arts and crafts. Acting, painting, soothsaying and other subject are also mentioned in the literature of that period.

The *gurukulas* were the early centres of education and learning. Similarly, the Buddhist *viharas* gave collective instructions and training to the monks. The Hindu temples maintained school for Vedic and Brahmanical studies. The kings made special grants to temples to run *satras* or alms-houses where the students were provided free food. A number of Gupta epigraphs from Garhwa belonging to Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta I reveal such special grants for

a *sattrā* attached to the Dashavatara temple of Vishnu. A carved stone panel from Garhwa at present in the State Museum, Lucknow, shows the feeding of pupils after *madhyandina* sandhya.⁴⁷ Thus there was a *gurukula* attached to the Vishnu temple at Garhwa and the Gupta emperors made special grants for the maintenance of a *sattrā* where free food was supplied to the students.

The epigraphic records from Bundelkhand reveal that the Prakrit was the common language till the end of the first century B.C. This was the period of Buddhist supremacy. With the dawn of the Christian era, the Prakrit came under the influence of Sanskrit, hence the majority of inscriptions of the 1st century A.D. are the mixed dialect *i.e.*, Prakrit influenced by Sanskrit. From the second century A.D. onwards Sanskrit got an upper hand. The script of early epigraphs is, Brahmi. Sanskrit became predominant during the rule of the Guptas who championed the cause of the Brahmanical revival.

A special script, the 'Box-headed' variety of the southern class of alphabets, was adopted for the inscriptions of the Gupta and Vakataka rulers of the Bundelkhand region. It first occurs in the Eran Stone inscription of Samudragupta. The same script is in the Udayagiri Cave inscription of Chandragupta II of the regnal year 82 and in other Vakataka records of Malwa and Bundelkhand. The main feature of this script is the box-headed tops of the letters, formed by sinking four short strokes in the shape of a square and leaving a block of stone or copper in the centre of them. As this script is found all over the Central India it may represent the Central Indian alphabets of that period.

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4

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The scant archaeological and literary material does not allow us to know the detailed economic conditions of the region. However, the agriculture, cattle-breeding, industry and trade were the main aspects of economy. The general idea of the economic conditions of the region can be had by studying the so-far discovered archaeological data and other associated records.

Agriculture was the backbone of economy. The majority of the people lived in the villages and practised agriculture and cattle-breeding. There is no evidence to show any organised attempt made by the State for irrigation. Big tanks and wells might have been used to irrigate the nearby fields.¹ The agriculture mainly depended on the monsoon. The land was distributed among individual holdings, which must have been cultivated by the owners and even by the hired labour. The primitive mode of ploughing with the help of oxen was the order of the day. The farmers purchased the items of their daily use with the help of their surplus yield. There were common pastures for grazing the cattle. The skilled craftsmen like the weavers, carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, cobblers, etc., fulfilled the day-to-day requirements of the peasantry. The *ghosha* (cattle-pond), *udyana* (gardens), *madhuka* (*mahuwa* trees), *palli* (hamlets) and *vithika* (roads) formed the assets of a village.² The *udranga* (land-tax) and *uparikara* (additional taxes) were levied on agriculture.³ Kautilya describes a number of taxes on agriculture. The *bhaga* was the state's share of produce, the *bali* was an undefined cess over and above *Bhaga*, the *kara* was levied on individual's property, the *vivita* was a levy on pastures, the *rajju* was a cess payable for survey and settlement and the *chorarajju* was a police cess.⁴

The cities and towns like Kaushambi, Bhita, Suktimati (modern Banda) Tripuri and Eran etc., were flourishing centres of trade and industry. The cities and towns of the Mauryan era were invariably surrounded by the city wall. The remains of a massive fortification were brought to light by the excavations at Kaushambi. Similarly, the excavations at Bhita have yielded the remains of a city wall. Marshall reported the remains of two buildings, III and IV, probably the guard-houses of the city wall of Bhita.⁵ The excavations at Eran conducted by the Department of Archaeology, University of Sagar, in the year 1960 unearthed mud defence wall and the moat around the ancient city of Airikina in period I itself.⁶

ARTS AND CRAFTS

The cities, were the centres of industry and trade. The trade was in the hands of industrial and commercial guilds who enjoyed considerable autonomy and power. Marshall excavated a guild-house at Bhita.⁷ The guild of the ivory-carvers is mentioned in one of the inscriptions of Sanchi *stupa*. Perfume dealers guild of Kaushambi was quite powerful as is evident from the coins bearing the legend, *gandhikanam*.⁸ The coins with the names of cities like Kaushambi, Tripuri, Vidisa Airikina suggest that these were issued by the respective city guilds of traders.⁹ A terracotta seal-die with the legend *sahijitiye nigamasa* in early Brahmi characters of 3rd-4th centuries B.C. found from Bhita suggests that trade in Bhita was controlled by a guild.¹⁰ An inscription on a coping stone from Bharhut mentions the donor *Karahakata Nigamasa* or the *nigam* (guild) Karahakata town.¹¹ The skilled craftsmen had their own guilds which looked after the interests of their profession, e.g., the Karitalai Copper Plate Grant of Maharaja Jayanath of Uchchhakalpa dynasty mentions the guild of artisans of the village Chhandapallika.¹² The Kosam Inscription of the reign of Bhadramagha informs us of the guild of stone-carvers who had installed asana-pattas or seats.¹³

The guild of the stone-carvers of Prayag are mentioned in the Pabhosa Inscriptions. Several caves were cut and carved at Pabhosa and Udayagiri in Bundelkhand region. Besides, the stone-carvers also

helped in erecting temples, carving out pillars, *asana-pattas*, etc. These guilds were very powerful.

There were numerous arts and crafts practised in that region as revealed by the excavations of Bhita. The art of metallurgy was well known. Several copper and bronze figures of the Buddha have been found. A beautiful female figure of copper was found from Bhita. The three Buddha statuettes of brass were recovered from Dhanesara Khera, near Ichhawar village in Banda District.¹⁴ The house-hold utensils of copper, such as basin, tripod, cup, cooking pot, saucers, bell and disc, etc., have been unearthed from Bhita.¹⁵ The glass beads from various excavated sites, such as Bhita and Tripuri, prove the existance of glass industry. The ornaments were made of precious metals. The male and female figures carved in bas-relief at Bharhut are adorned with beautiful ornaments, exhibiting intricate patterns and designs. Similarly, the ornaments worn by gods and goddesses of the Gupta age present a variety of motifs and forms. Thus the art of jewellery had reached maximum height during the Gupta age. The discovery of large number of beads of semi-precious stones suggest the art of stone cutting and polishing was well known.

Kaushambi had an important trade in cotton and the Bundelkhand must have been famous for its textile industry. An inscription from Dashapura (Mandasor in eastern Malwa) mentions about a guild of silk weavers who got a Sun temple constructed during the Gupta age.¹⁶ Thus the cotton and silk weaving formed an important industry of Bundelkhand during the Gupta period.

The art of pottery making was well developed. The pots were beautifully moulded in different shapes and baked. The large-sized earthen jars with short neck, curved outwardly, for the storage of corn, cooking pots, bowls and the roof-tiles had been excavated from Bhita. The beautifully moulded and baked terracotta-figurines from the excavations exhibit the high excellence of the potter's art. Besides, the ivory and bone objects suggest the trade of ivory carvers, the excellence of this art is mentioned in an inscription from the Sanchi *stupa*.

TRADE

Bundelkhand was noted for its brisk trade and commerce during the sixth century B.C. Kaushambi itself was a great centre of national and international trade. The renowned bankers of Kaushambi, viz., Ghosika (or Ghosita), Kakoda and Pavariya who built beautiful *aramas* (hermitages) for the Buddhist monks in their respective gardens, were known for their riches. A wealthy merchant Magha, the inhabitant of Suktimati (modern Banda), came to Kaushambi and gifted an umbrella to the shrine of Lord Buddha.¹⁷ These references prove that the wealthy merchants of Bundelkhand supported the cause of Buddhism during the early centuries of the Christian era.

The *Vinaya* Texts and other Buddhist records confirm that the river port of Kaushambi was bristling with internal and external trade. In fact Kaushambi was the junction of the main river route from east to west. The roads running south-west and north-west also converged on Kaushambi for import and export of goods from those quarters. Sahajati (modern Bhita) was its nearest feeding station down the Yamuna. According to Ghosh, "Upwards the river was used for the cargo and passenger boats plying from the east along the Ganges as far as Sahajati and along the Yamuna as far west as Kaushambi. The traffic downwards was as far as Kosala, Magadha and Champa and right upto the mouth of the Ganges and thence either across the Bay or along the coast to Burma".¹⁸

Thus Kaushambi was the greatest river-post for import and export of goods for the whole of north and Middle India during the sixth century B.C. and even later. Abundant coins of different regions and kings from Kaushambi and Bhita confirm it. The town of Sahajati was a feeding river station to the port of Kaushambi. The internal trade from Bhita was carried through the boats. According to the *Vinaya* texts the Vajjiputtakas went to Sahajati from Vesali by boats.¹⁹ The depiction of boats in Bharhut suggests that the water trade was carried through the boats in the 2nd-1st centuries B.C. The famous Sanskrit play *Ratnavali*, attributed to king Harshavardhana, mentions the story of the daughter of king Vikramabahu, who being

ship-wrecked in mid ocean, was rescued and brought to Kaushambi.²⁰ Thus, river transport played an important role in the economy.

There was a network of land and water routes which cut across the entire region of the Bundelkhand and linked it with almost all the important cities of India. Kaushambi was directly linked with Magadha and Kosala and this route was very often traversed by the traders. The famous Dakshinapatha passed through Mahismati and reached Kaushambi.²¹ There was a direct trade route joining Kaushambi with Varanasi. Another important trade route ran from Sravasti to Kaushambi via, Saket (modern Ayodhya). The ancient town of Vidisa, the capital of eastern Malwa, was connected with Kaushambi by another route which ran through the valleys of the river Betwa. The present railway line running through Vidisa (modern Bhilsa), Jhansi, Kalpi and Kanpur to Allahabad probably hints at this route. The present railway line running from Jabalpur to Allahabad, passing through the narrow Vindhyan range, would suggest the old internal route of Bundelkhand.

Kaushambi was also a great centre for the caravan merchants who carried on their trade through the land routes. They employed elephants, horses, chariots, oxen, donkeys and camels for carrying their goods from one place to another. The *Nalopakhyan* of *Vana Parva* in *Mahabharata* presents a lively description of the caravan merchants (*sartha*) going to the Chedi country or the Bundelkhand region²². When the caravan merchants were subjected to a sudden calamity they invoked Yaksha Manibhadra, their tutelary deity. It appears Manibhadra was held in high esteem by the tradesmen of the Bundelkhand region. The Brahmi inscription from Kosam, datable to circa 1st century A.D., records the erection of a stone railing (*vedica*) by a caravan merchant named Goti Putra a devotee of Manibhadra²³. Yaksha Manibhadra presided over the wealth of the caravan merchants of the Bundelkhand region during the 1st-2nd centuries A.D.

COINAGE

The earliest coins of Bundelkhand region are punch-marked. These were so named by James Prinsep, because each device had

been struck by a single punch or stamp. Due to the several separate stamps having been struck at different times, the earlier symbols are frequently obliterated. The edges of the coins are turned upward owing to their being stamped. At Eran these come from the top level and cover a period of 600 years from about the beginning of 3rd century B.C. to the end of 3rd century A.D.²⁴. The symbols comprise a semi-circle design, crescent, *swastika*, tree-in-railing, *chakra*, bull and the Ujjain (*vikra*). The copper was available in large quantities in the Balaghat area. These coins are generally square. The punch-marked coins were followed by the cast coins and later by the die-struck coins. Still later were the coins inscribed with the name of the city or the ruler. The units at Kaushambi, Vidisa, Eran and Tripuri produced a large number of copper coins.

As we do not find the inscribed coins of Asoka and his predecessors, it is presumed that the currency during the Maurya pre-Maurya times must have been confined to the early punch-marked coins. However, the post-Asokan era in Bundelkhand region brings forth a large number of inscribed coins. Altekar published a coin of king Vavaghosha who ruled over Kaushambi. His rule seems to have been followed by Asvaghosha, Parvata, Brihaspatimitra I etc., in the 2nd-1st centuries B.C. A large number of coins were issued by the later Sunga kings at Kaushambi, roughly from the 2nd century B.C. to 2nd century A.D. This is confirmed by the epigraphic data. Some of the Mitra coins of Kaushambi, belonging to 2nd century A.D., are die-struck.

Kaushambi became a stronghold of the Magha rulers sometime during the 2nd century A.D. In A.D. 1911 some coins attributed to Pothasiri were excavated at Bhita²⁵. A big hoard of Magha coins is reported to have been discovered at Orha village in Banda District of Bundelkhand²⁶. Another important hoard was found around Kaushambi²⁷. As per the analysis of the coins of the Magha dynasty, they contained 77% copper, 21% tin and 2% iron. The coins have no regular shape. They are roundish, squarish, rectangular, oval and triangular. They are generally die-struck. The general symbols are the 'tree within railing' and 'three peaked hill' on the obverse and 'the humped bull' on the reverse. In addition

we come across ancillary symbols like a 'wheel', 'conchshell', 'yupa', etc.²⁸

The coins of the Naga rulers who ruled Vidisha, Padmavati (Pawaya near Gwalior) and Kantipuri (Kutwar District Morena) represent indigenous tradition. These are of copper, die-struck and round. Some are rectangular also. The symbols on these coins are the 'circle of pellets', a 'peacock' or 'humped bull' to right or left. Some coins also bear a 'trident', a 'crescent', a 'lion' or a 'wheel'. The other side shows the circular Brahmi legend, giving the title, name of the ruler and the dynasty, the Naga. Often the honorific *Sri* is placed before the name of the ruler.

The Bodhis, who ruled over the Dahal region with Tripuri as its capital, issued their own currency. The coins acquired from the excavation of Tripuri are generally of lead, excepting a few which have an alloy of zinc. These are small and circular. Their weight varies between 7 and 40 grains. The various symbols are an 'arched hill', 'tree in railing', 'crescent', *dhwaja* and the 'waved lines'. The legend in Brahmi is invariably small and simple. The reverse is either plain or contains a human figure.

The Gupta monarchs were probably the first to issue coins in gold, silver and copper alike. Such coins have been excavated at Kaushambi, Vidisa-Sanchi and Eran in and around the Bundelkhand region. The sound political and economic conditions of the Gupta period as well as developed metallurgy might have been responsible for issuing the gold coins. The conquests of Malwa, Gujarat and Kathiawar added to the financial resources and provided a fresh opportunity to Gupta rulers to imbibe some of the new characteristics of the Saka coinage.

The coins of the early Gupta monarchs found from Eran and other adjoining areas throw an important light on their early history. A large number of copper coins of Ramagupta from Eran, Vidisa and Sanchi and Talbehat (Jhansi District), with '*Garuda* and lion' as symbols, throw a welcome light on the historicity of Ramagupta. The copper coins were issued right from the time of Samudragupta. The same were continued by Ramagupta, Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta. Skandagupta does not seem to have issued much of

the copper currency. The coins of Ramagupta were probably issued from the mints at Eran and Vidisa. The huge number of the silver and gold coinage of the Guptas, with amazing variety of legends and devices, are well known and the same continued to be in circulation in the Bundelkhand region also. The Gupta coinage, followed by those of the Hunas, provide interesting material for the study of the cultural history of Bundelkhand region.

The scant archaeological material available for the study to understand the growth of economy in the region is just not adequate to know even its major aspects. However, a critical study of the existing material and its comparison by drawing parallels from the contemporary economic condition of the other regions of the country would suggest that the agriculture, cattle breeding, village industries to fulfil the daily rural needs, the various arts and crafts and the trade, both internal and external, were the main avenues of income and expenditure. The despotic governments, the city-guilds of affluent traders, the various organisations of local businessmen, artisans and craftsmen and the rich landlords must have been controlling the reins of economy. The ordinary peasants, labourers and the petty workmen, which formed a sizeable majority, must have lived a poor life depending on the minority with better comforts and amenities of life. The cities and towns must have maintained better economic standards in view of the flourishing trade there. The discovery of large number of coins and terracotta seals from Kaushambi and Bhita would confirm it. The gold currency of the Gupta age would also suggest that the economy of the region had considerably improved.

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RELIGIUOS CONDITION

The religious condition of Bundelkhand region seems to be somewhat fluid during the 3rd century B.C. The grip of the Vedic religion over the people was loosening fast. With the rise of the Bhakti cult, the Hindu 'Trinity' was gaining popularity amongst the devotees of the Brahmanical faith. The Kshatriyas spear-headed an open revolt against the Vedic philosophy and rituals and championed the cause of Jainism and Buddhism. The caravan merchants and other business community adhered to the worship of the Yakshas, Nagas and the Tree-spirits. The superstitious and false beliefs played a major role in day to day worship of uneducated lot and particularly the lower sections of the society. There existed a marked difference between the religious pursuits and ideals of the intellectuals and the common people who believed more in the superficial aspects of religion such as the religious gatherings, pilgrimages and the popular shows etc.

BUDDHISM

The Buddhism was the most popular religion during the Maurya period. The Bundelkhand appears to have been a stronghold of the earlier sect, viz., Hinayanism. Kaushambi, the provincial headquarter of the Maurya empire, had a powerful monastery of the Theravadins. With the passage of time there arose sharp differences in doctrines and disciplinary rules amongst the monks of Kaushambi. To check dissension in the *Samgha*, emperor Asoka had to issue injunctions to the *mahamatras*, stationed at Kaushambi. The monks or nuns causing disruption in the *Samgha* were made to put on white robes and were expelled from the *Samgha*.¹ Asoka came with his second queen to Kaushambi where she made gifts of alm houses to the Buddhist monastery.²

Asoka was greatly concerned with the downfall in the moral standards of his people. He constantly went on tours to different parts of his dominions to preach *Dhamma* which intended for the better living and high moral values to be adhered to by the people. Asoka probably toured the entire Bundelkhand, preached his *Dhamma* to the poeple and got two edicts viz., the Rupanath and Gujarra, installed so that the peoples of his vast dominions could enjoy the bliss of heaven.

Asoka believed in the purity of thought and actions of the people than in the rituals. He tried to live with the high ideals and chastity of the Buddha's preachings and advised his people to follow the path of virtue. He did not hesitate to introduce the idea of 'Heaven', which could be attained by the people of high and low origin, by following the *Dhamma*. Asoka did not believe in the festive gatherings (*samajjas*) which ended with good food and drinks, nor in pleasant trips and the popular shows, which aimed at the merry-making and amusements of the people, without leaving any impact on their deteriorating moral standards.

The restraint in sensual pleasures and worldly conduct preached by Asoka could not produce any lasting effect on the minds of common people who derived inspiration more from the deep rooted social beliefs and customs. Thus the Buddhism which emerged during the Sunga period had little to do with the *Dhamma* of Asoka. The Buddhism, as witnessed through the monuments at Bharhut, Bodhgaya and Sanchi, is a popular and modified version which imbibes its colour and fabric from the age-old traditions and ideals of the Indian soil. These *stupas* are endowed with the visual charm of depicting the earlier folk tales and popular stories, which were later on incorporated into the ethical and metaphysical framework. The kings and wealthy merchants took pride in the construction of the Buddhist *stupas* and the lay-worshippers from far off places came and made their own contributions by way of erecting pillars, stone umbrellas and idols of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. The richly carved stone slabs were offered to embellish the body of the *stupas*. The numerous symbols and motifs, i.e., the lion, elephant, bull and horse, the lotus, *purnaghata*, wheel and Bodhi Tree, Sri

Lakshmi, Ganesa, Indra, Yakshas, Nagas and the Tree-spirits, which were adopted to illustrate the *Jataka* tales of Buddhism, are all of earlier Indian origin and had been in existence in India prior to the advent of Buddhism. They enjoyed familiarity with the Indian masses right from the Vedic era. Here, the idea was to popularise Buddhism to the last core so that people at large could identify themselves with the Buddhism to fulfil their religious aspirations and ideals. The chastity of conduct and thoughts, as envisaged by Asoka in his *Dhamma*, had receded into background. The lay-devotees took more interest in pilgrimage to far-off Buddhist shrines and making gifts, both in cash and kind, with a view to increase religious merits for themselves and their family members. A large number of short inscriptions engraved on the rail pillars, gateways and the carved stone slabs of the Bharhut *stupa* record the visits of royal personages, wealthy members of the business community, artisans, *bhikshus*, *bhikshunis* and the lay-worshippers of the Buddha, who came from distant parts of the country to pay homage to the worshipful *stupa*. The Bharhut records also preserve the simple style of *danam* which the devotees made there to enhance their individual religious merit. Thus the people in general derived solace neither in the gospels preached by the Buddha nor in the *Dhamma* as envisaged by Asoka to raise the moral standard of the people, but in the rituals prescribed by the clergy to be performed at the Buddhist religious shrines. This popular mode of worship of the visual objects by the lay-devotees brought Buddhism nearer to the ritual-based Brahmanism, quite contrary to its original aims and ideals. The Buddhist clergy, on the other hand, was busy fighting amongst themselves in offering intellectual interpretations to various doctrines and so also in determining the petty organisational matters of the *Samgha*.

With the dawn of the Christian era the structure of Indian society underwent a fast change. Various nomadic tribes of the Central Asia were inroading into India through the north-western frontiers. The Greek governors of Bactria (modern Balkh in northern Afghanistan beyond the Hindu Kush) had crossed Indian borders and established their principalities in Punjab and the lower Sindhu

valley. They had overran Madhyadesa. The Sanskrit drama, *Malavikagnimitram*, refers to a conflict between prince Vasumitra, grandson of Pushyamitra Sunga, and a Yavan power on the southern bank of Sindhu in ancient Malwa region. It is thus evident that the Indo-Bactrian Yavanas had brought the elements of Greek religion, philosophy and art in Indian soil. The close relationship between the later Sunga rulers of Vidisa and the Greek sovereigns of western Punjab is further proved by the Besnagar Inscription of the reign of Bhagabhadra which says that Heliadora (Heliodoras), a native of Takshila, came as an ambassador, though a Greek, had adopted the Bhagavata religion and set up a Garuda Pillar in honour of Vasudava (Krishna), the god of gods.

Later on the Sakas, the Parthians and the Kushans entered India and carved their political kingdoms right upto Malwa in Central India. A great social and political upheaval was witnessed during the early centuries of the Christian era. There was a dramatic change and admixture in the social, religious and artistic spheres of the Indian life and Bundelkhand was no exception.

The later history of Buddhism exhibits considerable impact of this social and religious change. The popular mode of worship in the Bhakti cult, involving cult images, necessitated a change in the abstract forms and symbols of the Buddhist pantheon. The human figure of the Buddha, the saviour, emerged out of this dire social and religious need. The followers of Mahayana or the Great Vehicle deemed it necessary to rejuvenate and revitalise the Buddhism by evolving the concept of a human figure of the Buddha with a view to compete with the growing popularity of the Neo-Brahmanical faith. In Mathura the human figures of the Yakshas were carved. The problem arose as to how the human figure of the Buddha should look like. No body had seen the Buddha in person. Hence the earlier idols of the Buddha are in the form of a Bodhisattva with a voluminous body and massive proportions, carved on the basis of earlier Yaksha prototypes. The epigraphs on some of the earliest Buddha figures describes him as Bodhisattva.³ They are devoid of the later concepts of *prajna* and *karuna*.

The concept of *Trikaya* (three bodies) of the Buddha, as envisaged by the Mahayanists, included the *Dharma-Kaya* which had no form, the *Sambhoga Kaya* or the earthly form with superhuman qualities and the *Rupa-Kaya* with material qualities, gave ample scope to the lay-devotees for worship and devotion in the same way as it was prescribed in the Bhakti cult for the Hindu Trinity. In the *Rupa-Kaya* concept the earthly body of the Buddha was subjected to all human frailties. This gave rise to the cult of the Bodhisattvas who had a human form with a desire and destiny to become Buddha at a future date.

Early figures of the Buddha represent Him as an ordinary human being. It was during the Gupta period, somewhere in fifth century A.D., that the figures of the Buddha, endowed with the divine qualities of compassion (*karuna*) and the supreme knowledge (*prajna*) were produced at Mathura and later at Sarnath. The Mankuwar stone image of the Buddha, dated in numerical symbols for 129 equivalent to A.D. 448-49, suggests the beginning of the formation of the Buddha images of the Gupta period. Here the head of the Buddha does not possess the curly hair, a predominant characteristic of the Gupta sculpture. A significant point to be noted in the inscription on the pedestal of the figure is the praise to *Dhyani Buddhas*⁴ which suggests that the concept of the *Dhyani Buddhas* had already come into vogue in the mid of the fifth century A.D.⁵ The full development of the Buddha figure took place at Sarnath, characterising its refinement and clear delineation.

The Mahayanists attached more significance to the concept of Bodhisattvas who refrained from reaching the stage of Buddhahood. The Buddhas, being absolutely free from all qualities (*nirguna*), could not render any service to living beings. The Bodhisattvas, on the other hand, could eradicate the distress of other living beings and help them in attaining happiness, heavenly bliss and *nirvana*. Hence the Bodhisattvas became more popular with the masses.

ICONOGRAPHY

The Buddhist *stupas* at Bharhut, Bodhgaya and Sanchi in and around the Bundelkhand region are the store houses of early

iconographic forms of Hinayanism. Till the beginning of the Christian era, the Buddha was worshipped through the well known symbols i.e., the white elephant descending from the heaven, as umbrella over the horse, the Bodhi tree, the wheel and the *stupa*, representing the birth, the Great Renunciation, the Enlightenment, the *Dharmachakra pravartana* and the *Mahaparinirvana*. No doubt, the wheel, the tree and the *stupa*, the vase of plenty and Lotus seem to have existed in India as symbols right from the Vedic period. Later on the Buddhists adopted them to fit in their iconographic framework so as to propagate Buddhism. They are represented in the architectural decor of the Buddhist *stupas* of the Sunga period with a view to depict the various life events of Buddha.

Another interesting feature of the Buddhist iconography of earlier phase is the inclusion of the Yakshas, Yakshis, Nagas and Tree-spirits to glorify their faith. The Yakshas, Nagas and Tree-spirits were held in high esteem by considerably large sections of the society. There are ample literary and archaeological evidences of their worship. The followers of the Vedic religion, particularly the Brahmins, did not probably attach much significance to the worship of the Yakshas and Nagas etc. Hence, it was a rare opportunity for the early Buddhist acharyas to include all such worshipful elements in the fold of Buddhism, probably a strategic end to enhance their following amongst the non-Brahmins. This is why, we find the life-size figures of six Yakshas and Yakshinis carved in bold relief on the faces of the corner pillars at different entrances to the courtyard of the Bharhut *stupa*.⁶ In the Buddhist mythology, the Yakshas are represented as the Masters of different directions. Interestingly, the two life-size figures, one of Kubera and the other of Virudhaka Yaksha, are carved at Bharhut on the pillars lying in their respective directions. The former stands associated with Ajakalako Yakha and Yakhi Chada or Chanda whereas the latter is accompanied by Gangito Yakho and Chakavako Naga Raja. The other figures carved on the western side are Suchiloma Yakho and Sirima Devata on the pillar and Supavaso Yakho on the other. In a field to the west of *stupa* was found a

pillar carved with the Yakshini Sudarsana.⁷ Thus the Yakshas formed an important part of the Buddhist iconography.

Apart from being the guardians of the four directions, the Yakshas are very often depicted as the garland-bearers on the carved panels of Bharhut. This aspect of the Yakshas in early Buddhist art suggests that the Yakshas and Yakshinis were accepted as the subordinate deities to further the cause of Buddhism. By giving such a dignified position to the Yaksha cult, the Buddhists must have won over the followers of the cult to accept Buddhism as their religion. The Yakshas had human form with supernatural qualities. They possessed heavenly power to help or harm human beings. A large number of Yaksha figures have been found from Bhita and Kaushambi which probably suggest that the Yaksha cult was quite popular in Bundelkhand. A colossal Yaksha figure from Bhita, now in the State Museum, Lucknow, has very interesting iconographic features. This is probably the only four-faced Yaksha figure so far discovered in India. There are two male figures on the obverse and reverse sides, the one carrying a water vessel (?) in the left hand and the right hand raised in *abhaya*. He wears a crown and other ornaments. The other figure has no ornaments and his hairs are combed in the middle to fall on the shoulders. On the two adjacent sides are seen a couchant lion seated below on one side and a jumping boar on the other. The lion and boar would probably suggest its Brahmanical association. Another seated figure of Yaksha presently in the Allahabad Museum, was found from Kaushambi. Here, the left hand of the figure holds a boar. The former is dated to 2nd century B.C. whereas the latter one is ascribed to 1st century A.D.

The Nagas too enjoyed a large following in the society. They were feared for their dreadful powers. The Pabhosa caves were dedicated to the Naga cult. An inscription from Pabhosa, datable to seventh century A.D., mentions that the cave was dedicated to Naga Kalasa and other deities.⁸ The Nagas are said to be the staunch supporters of Buddhism. A number of carved stone panels from Bharhut represent the serpent kings protecting the *stupas*.

It is evident that the Buddha was represented through certain well known symbols prior to the Christian era. With the *Trikaya*

(three bodies) concept of the Mahayanists, the need to carve an anthropomorphic form of the Buddha was felt. It has already been stated that the Mahayanists conceived the form of the Buddha as a human being who went on meditating to attain Enlightenment. Before the advent of the Buddha figure, the only models available in human form with supernatural powers were the Yaksha figures. Hence in early stages Buddha is represented as a seated or standing person with a stout body and the characteristic marks (*lanchnhanas*) of the great men (*Mahapurusha*). The skilled artisans of Mathura, who had inherited the tradition of carving the figures of Yakshas and Yakshinis from their forefathers, executed the earlier figures of the Master on the lines prescribed for fashioning the figures of Yakshas, who bore the similar religious significance and supernatural powers. This is why, the Buddha figures executed at the beginning of Kanishka's reign, exhibit the voluminous proportions of human physique and monumental frontality based on earlier Yaksha prototypes. One of these early Buddha statues, fashioned at Mathura, dated in the 2nd regnal year of Kanishka's era, was brought to Kaushambi and dedicated by a nun called Buddhmitra⁹. This image is presently housed in the Allahabad Museum. A similar image from Mathura dated in the 3rd regnal year of Kanishka, was brought and set up at Sarnath and is now in the Sarnath Museum. These two images throw a welcome light on the early iconography of the Buddha. Both these exhibit enormity of size, massiveness and frontality, which are the main characteristic features of the Yaksha figures discovered in various parts of the country. The head and the right arm of the Kaushambi Buddha, now in the Allahabad Museum are missing. He wears a diaphanous lower garment reaching below the knees. The *samghati* or the upper garment covers the left shoulder and arm. Interestingly according to the inscription the figure has been termed as Bodhisattva and not Buddha.¹⁰ The question arises as why these early Mathura images of the Buddha are termed as Bodhisattvas. It appears that the Hinayanists did not believe in the earthly form of the Buddha. It is only the Bodhisattvas who lived a worldly and mundane life. The Buddha had told specifically that no body could see him after death. Hence the

artists of Mathura were probably hesitant to produce the figure of the Master. They only carved out the figure of the Bodhisattvas. The Mahayanists later developed the concept of *Trikaya* and the same figure, along with the well known marks of the *Mahapurushas*, was attributed to the Buddha. The only mark of distinction between the later figures of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas were the attributes and ornamentation of the latter whereas the former could be known with the various *mudras* of hand and so also the *ushnisa*, a mark of supreme wisdom.

Thus the early figures of the Buddha, although curiously inscribed as Bodhisattva, "in the enormity of their size, their heavy proportions and their solid earthy massiveness happen to be very closely and intimately related with the Yaksha figures of Patna, Parkham and Pawaya"¹¹. The lack of visual perception and abstract concepts, such as Bodhi, prajna and Karuna and so also the technical inadequacy on the parts of early Mathura sculptors may be accounted for such blank and expressionless faces. Such fluid situation in Indian art appears to have continued for a period of more than fifty years while the Mathura sculptors exhibit a definite sign of advancement and departure.

The next stage of the Buddha being considered as a Mahayogin is reflected in the figure of the Buddha found from Katra, near Mathura. The figure, datable to first half of 2nd century A.D., exhibits a better draughtsmanship and execution. Here the modelling is superior, showing the broad shoulders, wide spread arms and proportionately thinned out belly with the predominant navel point. Although the broad shoulders and wide spread arms and fleshy trunk are reminiscent of earlier Yaksha models yet the well defined form, controlled outline and the relaxed modelling lead to a definite improvement in the carving. The predominant navel point, expanded chest to hold the breath and the upraised hair tied in a coiled knot over the forehead and so also the raised right hand pronouncing *abhaya*, are all suggestive of the Buddha being a *yogi*. The wide-open eyes and the stiff pose would probably denote the inability of the sculptor to bring out the inner expression of the *Yogic* pose and the serenity. The figure was still in formative stage.

It was during the Gupta age that the six limbs of Indian art viz., *rupabheda*, *pramana*, *bhava*, *lavanyayojana*, *sadrisya* and *varnika-bhanga* were recognised. The *bhava* or the expression of inner feeling or mood received greater emphasis in the hands of Gupta artists. The Mankuwar Buddha, dated in the Gupta era 129 (A.D. 148-49), is probably the first Buddha image, where the marks of abstract concept of universal compassion (*karuna*) are discernible in the half-closed eyes. The Mathurasque features, like the round face, broad and heavy shoulders and the somewhat fleshy physiognomical form still continue to dominate yet the gradually tapering trunk, controlled treatment of the plastic surface and the transparent drapery, like a fine wet silk, provide the figure with an abstract softness revealing inner experience. The new iconography, as seen in the Mankuwar example, paved the way for the most sensuous and aesthetically perfect icons of the Buddha later produced at Sarnath. The iconography fully developed at Sarnath is characterised by the curly hair, absence of *urna*, greater number of mudras, elaborate nimbus diaphanous drapery covering one or both the shoulders and the lotus or lion pedestal with donors on either end.

The concept of *Dhyani* Buddhas had been evolved much earlier. The Mankuwar Buddha Inscription opens with the reverence to the Buddhas¹². They are also mentioned in one of the Sanchi inscriptions of the year 131. There were additions and alterations in the figures at a later stage.

A large number of Bodhisattvas with special iconographic features were carved at Sarnath. A notable change in the iconography of the Bodhisattva Maitreya of the Gupta period is his holding a bunch of *Nagakesara* flowers instead of the nectar flask.

HINDUISM

The period under review was an era of Brahmanical revival and rejuvenation. The Vedic form of worship and performance of sacrifices was disappearing fast, giving place to the growing cult of *Bhakti*. Still, the performance of Vedic sacrifices continued side by side with the Neo-Brahmanical faith in Bundelkhand region. The Allahabad Municipal Museum *Yupa* Inscription, datable to the first half of second

century A.D., records the erection of seven *Yupas* or pillars in connection with seven Soma sacrifices known as *Sapta-Soma-Samstha*¹³. These included *Agnishtoma*, *Atyagnishtoma*, *Ukathya*, *Shodasin*, *Vajpeya*, *Atiratra* and *Aptoryama*. The performer of these sacrifices was Sivadatta a trusted minister of some king. A village was offered as *dakshina* to the priest conducting the sacrifices.

The section C of the same record, consisting of lines 12-16, is in prose. Here Minister Sivadatta is credited with the planting of a *kovidara* grove in the garden of a Siva temple. The last line 16 expresses the hope that Lord Mahesvara may be pleased over and over again which suggests the popularity of Shiva worship.

The epigraph records the co-existence of the Vedic as well as Pauranic religions at the same time. In the words of Altekar, "The record thus shows how in the every day life of the 2nd century Hindu community, Vedic and Pauranic religions were harmoniously blended together. It would, however, also attest to the growing hold of the Pauranic religion even on the minds of those who were taking an active part in the revival of the Vedic religion"¹⁴. This unique combination of the Vedic and Pauranic mode of worship continued even later as we find the Vakataka king, Pravarasena I performing these seven sacrifices¹⁵. The Gupta emperor, Samudragupta also performed the Asvamedha sacrifice as a part of his conquests in various directions.

The growing popularity of various cults, viz., Vaishnavism, Saivism and Saktism gave rise to the worship of various gods and goddesses. The numerous art centres like Mathura, Kaushambi, Bhita, Udaigiri and Eran were busy in producing cult images which were enshrined in the various temples of the country. It was here that the concepts of the *vyuhas* and *vibhavas* of Vishnu were developed. The erection of the cult-pillars (*dhvajastambhas*), signifying the worship of a particular god, had already come into vogue¹⁶. The images of Siva, both the anthropomorphic representations and the Mukha-lingas were carved and installed in places of worship. Similarly, the Sakti or the Mother-goddess was universally worshipped. The anthropomorphic representations of the Mother-goddess are found in the gold plaques and so also in terracotta art¹⁷. The cult of the

Mother-goddesses in its initial form is represented in one of the terracottas from Bhita, presently housed in Indian Museum, Calcutta, where the Mothers are shown seated in a circular tray.

It is thus evident that the centuries preceding to the Christian era witnessed a change in the Brahmanical faith wherein the Vedic religion was fast deteriorating yielding place to the cult of *Bhakti*. However, the Vedic religion lingered on side by side with the Neo-Brahmanical faith for quite some time. The image worship, the most fascinating aspect of the *Bhakti* cult provided an easy and loveable substitute to the devotees who could not afford the costly sacrifices prescribed in the Vedic mode of worship. Even the kings and nobles preferred a god as their tutelary deity who would help them in fulfilling their worldly desires. This gave a lasting blow to the Vedic religion which was eventually modified and modelled to suit the convenience of the Hindu society. The Pauranic mythology exploited the Vedic concepts to the maximum to provide the most colourful background to later Hinduism which enjoyed the visual charm and thrilling experience of the God being personified and approached by every individual worshipper.

Such a personal touch and thrilling experience of being face to face to one's own deity (*pratyaksha devata*) was something unique and unknown to human mind. This is probably the reason for an unbound support and increased popularity of the Neo-Brahmanical faith which had grown with the *Bhakti*-cult. The Indian kings and nobility, peasants and tradesmen, men and women accepted this Neo-Brahmanism and even the foreign rulers and dignitaries, who had settled in India, professed their faith in Hindu gods and goddesses. The first foreign convert to Hinduism was Heliodorus, the Greek, the son of Diya and an inhabitant of Takshila, who had come as the Yavana ambassador from the Greek king Antialkidas to the court of the king Kasiputra Bhagabhadra of Vidisa. This information is gleaned through the Besnagar Pillar Inscription wherein it is stated that the Greek envoy Heliodorus adopted Vaishnavism and got constructed a *Garuda*-column (*Garuda-dhvaja*) in the honour of Lord Vishnu during the 2nd century B.C.¹⁸. It is not the solitary case of the foreigners embracing Hinduism. Some of the Saka chiefs,

viz., Mahakshatrapa Sridharavarman, the son of Saka, Nanda of eastern Malwa, were converted and they adopted Hindu names.¹⁹

The Neo-Brahmanical faith received an extra impetus during the Gupta age. The Guptas were the Param *Bhagawatas* and provided liberal patronage to Vaishnavism. A large number of magnificent temples, dedicated to Vishnu, were got constructed at Udayagiri, Eran, Gadhawa and Deogarh, etc., where the devotees from far off places flocked together to perform worship. It was an era of great cultural activity when the earlier religious norms and traditions were synthesised and new ritualistic trends and traditions were evolved to lay the foundations of later Hinduism. The temple was an abode of god and a place for the collective worship. The kings, nobles and other wealthy persons made generous gifts and provided grants to temples for day to day worship and its general maintenance. A large number of dedicatory inscriptions providing grants to various temples have been discovered from the whole of the Bundelkhand region.

The Pali Copper-plate Grant of Maharaja Lakshmana, datable to 5th-6th centuries A.D., throws light on the religious condition.²⁰ It records the grant of an *agrahara* (village) to the Brahmin Revatisvamin of Kautsagotra with a view to increase the religious merits of his parents as well as his own. It also has a verse composed by Vyas which states, "He who confiscates land that has been given, whether by himself or by another, becomes a worm in ordure and sinks into hell together with his ancestors". It further states "the giver of land enjoys happiness in heaven for sixty thousand years; but the confiscator (of a grant) and he who assents (to an act of confiscation) dwells for the same number of years in hell". It is evident from the aforesaid inscription that the gift of land to the Brahmins was act of piety. The confiscation of a grant was deemed to be an act of a great sin.

MODE OF WORSHIP

The Allahabad Municipal Museum *Yupa* Inscription of 2nd century A.D. as mentioned above, suggests that the practice of erecting *Yupas* (stone pillars) to perform sacrifices still continued. Such

pillars were found at Isapur, Badva and Bijayagadh. The mighty rulers and wealthy personages performed costly sacrifices with the help of learned priests. A *dakshina* was paid to the priests for conducting the sacrifice.

The same inscription records the practice of constructing temples to enshrine the images of the Hindu divinity. A temple was constructed for the god Mahesvara or Siva, the tutelary deity of the minister, Sivadatta, the donor. A grove of the Kovidara trees was planted around the temple. Besides, a *sattra* or an alms-house was attached to the temple for supplying free food to the wandering mendicants. A large number of inscriptions of the Gupta age speak of the maintenance of *sattras* attached to the temples, where free food was served to mendicants, Brahmanas and students residing there for their religious education.²¹

The gifts of lower and upper garments to the Brahmanas is known from a Gadhwā inscription of Kumaragupta²² I. Similarly another Gadhwā stone Inscription refers to the grant made for providing perfumes, incense and garlands, etc., to be offered to the god in the daily worship²³. In order that the daily worship of the Lord is uninterrupted the grants of revenues accruing from the various lands of a village viz., *ghosha* (cattle pond), *udiyana* (gardens), *madhuka* (*mahuwa* trees), *palli* (hamlets) and *vithika* (roads) were made to the temples.²⁴

Asana-pattas or the pedestals to instal the icons of various goddesses near the bathing ghats of the ponds, tanks and lakes were erected. The Kosam Inscription of the regnal year 81 of Bhadrāmāgha's reign, corresponding to the first quarter of 3rd century A.D. refers to the erection of *asana-pattas* (seats) by a guild of stone masons.²⁵ The similar inscriptions, belonging to the regnal year 87 of the reign of the aforesaid ruler, presently housed in the Allahabad Museum, further speak about the setting up of two *asana-pattas* at a pond for the goddess Nobla Devi.²⁶ Thus, the *asana-pattas* were put up near the bathing *ghats* so that the devotees could worship the goddess after their bath. These idols were installed under a tree in an open courtyard, as the construction of structural temples was confined to the kings, nobles and other wealthy personages. The people in general worshipped gods and goddesses in the open.

Thus the people at large performed collective worship in temples. They came from far off places and offered cash, lands, food, clothes and other objects such as flowers, perfumes, incense, etc., to the service of the presiding deity of the temple. In villages, idols were worshipped in the open. The offering of free food and clothes to the wandering mendicants and the learned Brahmanas was an act of religious merit.

VAISNAVISM

The Bhagavatism was the most predominant sect of the Brahmanical faith which flourished in Bundelkhand region right from the 2nd century A.D. onward. The popularity of the sect had grown to such an extent that even the intelligentsia of the different nationalities, who came to India at that time, were greatly influenced and driven in its fold. Heliodorus, an ambassador of an Indo-Greek ruler in the court of the king, Bhagabhadra of Vidisa, embraced Vaisnavism and got erected magnificent Vaisnava column in praise of Visnu. The *Garuda*-pillar at Besnagar, near Vidisa is a brilliant example to confirm this statement. The other similar columns carved in the shape of a *makara* (mythical alligator) and a *tala* (fan palm), both being the cognizance of *Samkarshana* and *Pradyumna*, were found at Besnagar in the course of an excavation. The name Vasudeva is engraved in one of the early clay sealings from Bhita²⁷. Thus second century B.C. was a period of transformation when the Bhagawat cult of the *Gita* was being converted into later Vaisnava cult of the Gupta age. The *para* aspect; of the Lord, which is formless and absolute, was the greatest object of Bhakti. Bhagawan Vasudeva, in His *para* aspect, created from himself the *vyuhas* and also *Prakriti* to manifest the various *gunas* or aspects. The discovery of the *Garuda*, *Tala* and *Makara* columns at Besnagar, probably hints at the beginning of the *vyuha* concept wherein Vasudeva, Samkarshana and Pradyumna were being worshipped with the help of their respective symbols. A fragment of a *makara* capital (*Makara-dhvaja*), from Kaushambi is presently in the Allahabad Museum. The flat modelling of the tail and the top surface of the sculptures remind us of the bas-relief carving of Bharhut. The fragment can

be dated to the 2nd century B.C.²⁸ It may possibly be inferred that the tenets of the Pancharatra system, emphasizing the five-fold form; viz, *Para*, *Vyuha*, *Vibhava*, *Antaryamin* and *Archa* were first developed in Bundelkhand region of Central India. Later this concept travelled northward from Besnagar to Tumain, near Gwalior, where a two-armed figure of Samkarshana was found.²⁹ Mathura became the principal seat of the Vasudeva-Krishna cult, where the earliest images associated with it are found.

Banerjea is of the opinion that *vibhava* aspect (the concept of incarnation) of Vishnu was in existence much earlier than that of the *Vyuhas*.³⁰ The former is mentioned in the *Bhagavadgita* yet the idea of divine incarnation received much impetus during the Gupta period. The literary and archaeological date of the Gupta period show that both, the *Vyuhavada* and *Vibhavavada* of Vishnu were current side by side. Several *Puranas* composed during the Gupta period laid greater emphasis on the divine incarnations of Vishnu.

Various inscriptions of the 5th and 6th centuries A.D., throw light on the iconography of Vishnu which was developed on the basis of Pauranic mythology. The *Vyuhavada* was further developed and twenty other secondary or sub-*Vyuhas* are said to have been evolved in various names of Vishnu which are the synonyms of the principal deity, Vasudeva-Vishnu-Narayana, characterising the Vedic aspect of the Lord.³¹ Needless to emphasise, the complex character of Vaishnava mythology was fully in vogue in Bundelkhand region right from the beginning of the Gupta age. A lintel, broken into two parts, from Gadhwa is now kept in the State Museum, Lucknow. To the right end of the lintel, there is carved an image of Vishnu in *Visvarupa* form, as propounded in the *Bhagavadgita*. On the left side and right shoulder of the four-armed Vishnu figure, the faces of a boar and lion are still visible.³² The face of the main figure, now defaced, should have been that of a horse (?). Behind the three heads of Vishnu there is a cluster of tiny human heads, representing the *Vaikuntha Chaturmurti* or Vishnu. Similarly, a sculpture of Vishnu from Gadhwa presently in the National Museum, New Delhi, throws light on this aspect. Here the fish-like figure of the *Matsya Avatar* is carved along with the figure of Brahma and other divine companions.³³ The

Dasavatara temple at Gadhwa and Deogarh in Bundelkhand are important monuments to throw ample light on the development of iconography of Vishnu, characterising His Vedic as well as Pauranic aspects. The Nara-Narayana panel, carved in a niche of the Deograh temple, represents the earlier concept, whereas the *Seshasayin* Vishnu and the *Gaja-Moksha* panel exhibit the Pauranic aspect of the Vishnu.

The donatory records of the Gupta monarchs at Gadhwa and Eran further confirm that Vishnu was addressed through various auspicious synonyms, which present the sub-Vyuhās of the Lord. For example, the Eran Stone Pillar Inscription records the erection of a *dhvaja-stambha* of Vishnu, under the name of Janardana.³⁴ Similarly, the Eran Stone Boar Inscription of Toramana mentions about the erection of a stone temple of Narayana (Vishnu).³⁵ The Gadhwa stone Inscription of the year 148 records the installation of an image of Vishnu, under the name Anantasvamin.³⁶

Vishnu was the most popular deity of Bundelkhand during the Gupta age. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were very popular. The Gadhwa Stone Inscription of the year 148 records the grant of a land to the temple of Vishnu, under the name Chitrakutasvamin, which refers to Rama who lived at Chitrakuta while in exile.³⁷ The scenes from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* depicted in the sculptural decor of the Deogarh and several other temples of the Gupta period reaffirm the popularity of Vishnu. The Vishnu temples at Udayagiri, Eran, Gadhwa, Deogarh, etc., attest the same.

SAIVISM

Siva, one of the foremost deities of the Hindu Trinity, was equally popular in Bundelkhand. The important centres of Saivism, like Bhita, Kosam and Kalanjara are known through the epigraphic and sculptural evidence which suggest that the Saivism was flourishing from 2nd century B.C. The *Panchmukha Linga* from Bhita was installed in the 2nd century B.C. by Nagasri, son of Vasathi, as per the inscription on the shaft.³⁸ Scholars like Bloch, Fuhrer and Banerjea are inclined to take the sculpture as a top part of a memorial column and not a *linga*.³⁹ Secondly, the inscription mentions *Lago of the sons*

of *Khajahuti*, which according to Banerjea, does not make any sense. The sculpture, however, exhibits the four faces on the four sides of the shaft. On the top, there is a male bust with two hands, holding a water vessel in the left hand and the right hand raised in *abhayamudra*. The second line of the inscription reads, "May the god be pleased". This expression proves that the sculpture whether meant to be a *linga* or the top of a memorial column, was associated with the worship of Siva. Incidentally, the term *Khajahuti* is a synonym of Siva as the Supreme God hence the expression 'sons of Khajahuti' may refer to the *Vyuha* aspect of Siva having four forms : *Aghora*, *Tatpuruṣa*, *Sadyojata* and *Vamadeva*. The top figure with two hands can be the anthropomorphic form of Siva in the name of Khajahuti. The Bhita Ling is, thus, the earliest sculpture to represent the *Vyuhavada* of the Siva sect.

Another *Chaturmukha Linga* from Kaushambi, datable to the 2nd century A.D. now in the Allahabad Museum,⁴⁰ portrays two faces exhibiting the turban and the *Aghora* aspect of Siva. These *Mukha-Lingas* confirm that Saivism was a flourishing sect in Bundelkhand during the few preceding and succeeding centuries of the Christian era. The famous Siva-Parvati sculpture from Kaushambi, now in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, is another masterpiece which shows that the anthropomorphic representations of Siva had come into existence during the rule of the Magha dynasty. The inscription on the pedestal bears the date 139 in an unknown era. Mirashi believes them to be of Kushan era,⁴¹ which means the sculpture can be dated to *circa* A.D. 217. It has already been pointed out that a structural temple of Siva, under the name of Mahesvara, was constructed in the Bundelkhand region during the first half of 2nd century A.D.⁴² The Magha kings of Kaushambi, extended a liberal patronage to Saivism. Many images of Siva were enshrined in structural temples.

Marshall has brought out significant material from his excavations of Bhita which throws valuable light on the Saivism of the Gupta age. Of the religious clay seals from Bhita, five refer to the cult of Siva under the names of *Kalesvara*, *Kalanjara*, *Bhattaraka* and *Mahesvara*.⁴³ The Saiva symbols such as *linga*, *Nandi*, trident and *Nandi-pada*, etc., are engraved on the seals. A clay seal of the Gupta period, exhibits a *linga* enshrined in the famous shrine of Kalanjara,

which is a famous pilgrimage for the devotees of Siva in Bundelkhand even today.⁴⁴

Thus Siva was one of the most popular deities in Bundelkhand where a large number of early Saiva temples have been discovered. Rock-cut caves and the structural temples were constructed in the beginning of 2nd century A.D. The worship of the *Mukha Lingas* became popular during the 2nd-1st centuries A.D. The Sunga and Magha rulers extended liberal patronage to Saivism and the practice continued till the Gupta period. The Udaigiri Cave Inscription refers to an image of Siva installed in a cave got constructed by Virasena, a minister of Chandragupta II.⁴⁵ The Siva temples at Tigawa, Nachana-Kuthara, Bhumara, and several other places support the above view. The temples were surrounded by groves and *sattras* were attached for providing free food and clothes to the mendicants. People from far off areas flocked to these places of pilgrimage to pay homage to their overlord.

OTHER TUTELARY DEITIES

Sakti :—Sakti or the Mother-goddess was also popular prior to the dawn of the Christian era. Sri-Lakshmi is often found on the full-medallions at Bharhut. These scenes represent a female either standing on lotus or seated on a full-blown lotus.⁴⁶ The two elephants, one on each side, also stand on lotus and pour water over her head from inverted jars held by the trunk. The lotus seat of the goddess is seen rising from a Vase of Plenty. Thus the goddess represents the cult of fertility and plenty. The concept of Sri-Lakshmi or Gaja-Lakshmi seems to have continued on the same line by the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains alike. A stone plaque from Kaushambi, datable to 1st century B.C., representing Gajalakshmi standing with right hand raised in abhaya mudra and left hand placed on the hip, is another example to confirm.⁴⁷ The two elephants, one on each side, stand on lotus flowers with long stalks and pour water over the head of the goddess. A clay seal found from the excavations of Bhita represents the same theme.⁴⁸ A life-size terracotta figure of Gaja-Lakshmi from Kaushambi is now in the University Museum of Allahabad.

The construction of *asanpattas* (the stone seats for the Mother-goddesses) during the Magha dynasty has been referred to earlier. A circular terracotta tray, showing the goddesses seated in a circle, was excavated from Bhita and is in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. The terracotta plaques from the same site showing the goddess, Mahisasuramardini, are also exhibited in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

The cult of Sakti received impetus during the Gupta age. The description of *Chandi* in seven hundred verses of the *Markandeya Purana* provided life and blood to the terrific aspects of the goddess. A terracotta plaque, showing the goddess, Mahisasuramardini, from Bhita is also housed in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. Similarly, an architectural fragment from Bhumara, now in Allahabad Museum, shows the same form of the goddess.⁴⁹ A stone sculpture from Kausambi, in the Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad, depicts the goddess trampling the buffalo-demon. The main characteristic feature of Mahisasuramardini in all the early sculptures from Bundelkhand exhibits a dynamic female figure, who overcomes *mahisa* with the help of her physical power. The goddess is invariably shown trampling *mahisa* by her right leg and one of her hands holds the hind legs of the animal firmly.

Besides, the worship of the river-goddesses Ganga and Yamuna was quite popular during the Gupta age. The door jambs of the Gupta temples are mostly decked with the figures of Ganga and Yamuna. A very beautifully carved figure of the goddess Ganga, standing on a crocodile, has been discovered from Besnagar.

Surya :—The worship of Surya (Sun-god) has been popular throughout the Bundelkhand region since remote antiquity. Barua has identified a life size male-figure from Bharhut with Surya, as it wears a tunic with long sleeves and high boots.⁵⁰ However, the identification is not certain. The Sun worship received impetus during the Gupta age, as is evident from a number of epigraphic records. The Mandasor Inscription of the time of Kumaragupta refers to the installation of an image of Surya in a temple constructed by the silk-weavers.⁵¹ A Sun image is mentioned in Khoh Copper Plate Inscription of Maharaja Hastin.⁵²

The earliest anthropomorphic representation of Surya in Bundelkhand referable to 6th century A.D. is noticed on a lintal from Gadhwa. It is presently housed in the State Museum, Lucknow. On the right end of the lintel, there appears a Surya figure in a circle seated in a chariot drawn by seven horses. On either side of Surya, are Usha and Pratyusha, dispelling the darkness. Another notable sculpture of Surya, datable to the seventh century A.D. recovered from Bhita is now in the Allahabad Museum.⁵³ Here, Surya is in *udichyavesa* and holds a small bunch of lotus with short stalks in both hands. On the right side of the deity stands Pingala wearing a peaked scythian cap and holding pen and inkpot in his two hands. On the left is Dandi, wearing similar dress and holding a staff.

The figures of other Hindu gods and demi-gods have been recovered from the various architectural remains of the Gupta temples. For example Kartikeya and Yama are found in the *chandrasalas* (circular niches of the carved slabs) from Bhumara and are presently kept in the Allahabad Museum. The figures of Yakshas, Gandharvas and Vidyadharas were also produced.

JAINISM

The Buddhism and Hinduism had made headway in Bundelkhand right from the Maurya period. Yet, the Jainism remained inconspicuous during the earlier period. No epigraphic and architectural evidence prior to Gupta age has been found. The reasons for this obscurity are not clear. Probably the Jains concentrated their religious and architectural activity at Mathura which was a great flourishing centre of the Jain pantheon.

The earliest epigraphic Jain evidence is from Udayagiri. The epigraph of Kumaragupta's reign refers to the erection of a statue of Parsva by a private individual. The huge image is under the expanded hood of a snake with a female attendant.⁵⁴

The three inscribed images of Jaina Tirthankaras from Vidisa mention the name of *Maharajadhiraja Sri Ramagupta*⁵⁵ in Brahmi. These are probably the earliest anthropomorphic representations of the Jain Tirthankaras in the Bundelkhand region.

ICONOGRAPHY OF VISHNU AND SIVA

The numerous archaeological remains from Besnagar, Tumain and Eran (in eastern Malwa and Udaigiri), Deogarh, Bhita, Kosam, Gadhwā, Nachana, Bhumara, Khoh and Tigawa in the north-eastern and southern parts of Bundelkhand speak about the development of neo-Brahmanism, which laid greater emphasis on the image-worship of Hindu gods and goddesses. The earlier iconography of Vishnu and Siva was developed on the mixed concepts of the Vedic and Pauranic theology. It was during the Gupta age that the two great epics, viz., *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, along with various *Puranas* provided new life and blood to the Hindu pantheon. It gave rise to them ultiple para-aspects and other incarnatory forms of the two gods, followed by their *parivara devatas*.

Vishnu :—It has already been mentioned that the discovery of the *Garuda*, *Tala* and *Makara* columns from Besnagar, representing the emblems of Vasudeva, Samkarshana and his son, Pradyumna, suggest the symbolic worship of the *Vyuha* cult of Vishnu. Similarly, a *Chaturmurti* or *Vaikuntha* form of Vishnu is found represented on the right end of a lintel from Gadhwā which is presently housed in the State Museum, Lucknow. There, the figure of Vishnu, six armed, stands in *sambhanga* pose. The front right hand is broken, the middle right hand rests on the head of one of the miniature human figures standing by his right side and the upper right hand holds an indistinct object. The front left hand is placed akimbo, the middle one is again placed on the head of an *ayudha-purusa* and the upper left hand carries some unidentifiable object. The figure has three heads, the central one probably a human face whereas the left and right ones are the faces of a boar and a lion. Over the central head, there appears a human bust with raised hands. Behind the three heads are eight (?) human heads arranged one over the other in two rows, forming a big halo. The outer space around the cluster of heads is covered with the flames rising upward. The figure wears a long garland, ear-rings and short loin cloth.⁵⁶ A male attendant holds a big parasol over the head of Vishnu. None of the scholars, who have described this figure, identified the human bust over the central head of Vishnu. Most probably, it represents the fourth invisible face of a demon, which is supposed

to be at the back but the artist has invented a clever device to show it. Thus, the four faces of Vishnu, the central one being that of a man, the side ones of a lion and boar and the back one that of a demon, represent *Vyuha viz.*, Vasudeva (central), Samkarshana (right), Pradyumna (left) and Aniruddha (back). The figure is the earliest representation of Vishnu in his complete *Vyuha* aspect. Similar figures of a later date, have been noticed at Khajuraho. An image of Vaikuntha Chaturmurti is carved on the southern face of the outer western wall of the main sanctum of the Sun Temple, popularly known as Chitragupta Temple. Besides the three visible faces being human, leonine (right) and porcine (left), there is a cluster of eight tiny human heads attached to the central head. The total number of heads including the invisible one on the back, as Banerjea points out, are twelve, symbolizing the twelve *Vyuhās* (four primary and eight secondary) of Vishnu.⁵⁷ Another similar figure of Vaikunthesvara was enshrined in the main sanctum of Lakshmana Temple at Khajuraho.

Various iconographic forms of Vishnu such as Nara-Narayana, Anantasayin, Trivikrama, Narasimha and Vaman, etc., characterise the composite Vedic-Brahmanical theology which seems to have been fully evolved at the beginning of the Gupta period.⁵⁸ The archaeological evidences from Udaigiri, Gadhwa and Deogarh attest it. The Vaikuntha or Visvarupa Vishnu on the lintel of Gadhwa, as described earlier, the Nara-Narayana panel and Anantasayin Vishnu at Desavatara temple of Vishnu at Deogarh represent this Vedic concept.

The Nara-Narayana panel at Deogarh temple depicts the two sage-like incarnations of Vishnu, practising penance in the Badrikashrama. The serene atmosphere and rocky background of the panel represent the Badrikashrama. The four-armed figure of Narayana carved in relief is holding a rosary in the upper right, a book (?) in the upper left and a *kamandalu* in the lower left. Two armed Nara is in deep meditation. His right hand is holding a pen. The tranquil faces with closed eyes are suggestive of *dhyana*. The Sayanamurti of Vishnu, with the god lying on the folds of *Adisesha* in the midst of milky ocean, is again a Vedic theme representing the "water cosmology", i.e., the origin of the Universe (cosmos) from the

primeval waters. A relief in one of the side niches in the Dasavatara Temple shows four-armed Vishnu reclining on the folds of *Sesha*, with Lakshmi at his feet. The two figures: one female probably Gadadevi and a male *Ayudhapurusha*, are standing near the feet of the Lord. The lowermost portion depicts the fight of Madhu and Kaitabha, witnessed by four other figures. On the upper part Brahma on a lotus is emerging from below, Siva, Parvati, Ganesa, Indra and Vishnu on their respective mounts are also present.

The multiple heroic and compassionate deeds of Vishnu to grant protection and prosperity to devotees were carved on the walls of temples. The existing folk tales were probably selected and woven in the mythological framework of Hinduism to enhance its popularity. The possibility of Bodhisattva philosophy of Mahayanism being imbibed in the formation of later Hindu mythology of Vishnu and Siva can also not be ruled out. For instance, the Gaja-Moksha panel in one of the major niches of the Dasavatara temple shows Vishnu on *garuda* rushing to protect the pious elephant from the ghastly clutches of the crocodile. Here the idea of salvation of the poor and downtrodden is akin to the Bodhisattva philosophy of Mahayanism. Such themes were introduced running parallel to Buddhism with a view to attract more people within the fold of Hinduism.

The *Vibhavas* or the incarnatory forms of Vishnu came to be worshipped in Bundelkhand from the beginning of the Gupta period. The colossal two-armed Varaha figure of Vishnu, carved in high relief on the facade of the Chandragupta II Cave at Udaigiri, provides a positive evidence. The figure standing erect, wears a long garland (*vanamala*), a crown, a broad necklace and other ornaments. The two front hands are broken and missing, whereas the back hands rest upon the heads of the two *Ayudhapurushas*: the right hand on Gadadevi and the left one on Chakrapurusha, which is somewhat damaged. Another gigantic Varaha figure of Vishnu in its theriomorphic form was enshrined at Eran by Dhanyavishnu in the reign of the Huna King Toramana. The right tusk of the boar is holding up a female figure, representing the deliverance of the Earth by the Boar In-

carnation of Vishnu. The decorated body of the Varaha bears an inscription in Brahmi referring to the first regnal year of Toramana.

The earliest colossal statues of Varaha incarnation of Vishnu are from the eastern Malwa datable to the Gupta period. It is quite likely that Chandragupta II, who subjugated the Saka prince and rescued Dhruvadevi, the wife of Ramagupta, and thereby the honour of the Gupta dynasty, favoured this form of Vishnu with a view to eulogize his own deed. This could have been the reason behind the widespread popularity of Varaha Incarnation in Central India.

A stone panel with an anthropomorphic form of the Matsya Avatara with Brahma on the top and other divine companions mentioned earlier, is presently in the National Museum, New Delhi. A four-armed figure of Nrisimha, seated in Sukhasana pose on a lotus is carved in one of the 'chaitya-window' type niches of the Dasavatara temple. A large figure of Nrisimha from Eran is presently in the Museum of the Saugar University.

The two great epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* provided incentive to the artisans of Bundelkhand to depict scenes relating to the human incarnations of Rama and Krishna. The two epics had become immensely popular in all sections of the society during the Gupta age though the scenes from the *Ramayana* start appearing in the plastic art of the region much earlier than the Gupta period. A few terracotta plaques, belonging to the 2nd-1st centuries B.C., have been discovered from Kaushambi and Bhita. The scenes of Sita's abduction by Ravana are clearly depicted there.⁵⁹ A large number of carved stone slabs with scenes from the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and *Bhagawat* have been brought to light from Gadhwa, Eran and Deogarh etc. An exquisitely carved stone panel from Gadhwa in State Museum, Lucknow, exhibits a duel between Jarasandha and Bhima, four-armed Krishna, witnessing the bout. A few stone-slabs, with the scenes of Krishna-lila, were found from the Gupta temples at Eran.⁶⁰ An early Gupta sculptured panel from Nachna depicts the *Ramayana*-scene where Ravana is abducting Sita.⁶¹

The terraced basement of the Dasavatara temple continued

episodes from the *Ramayana* and the *Bhagawat*. Some of these panels are now in the National Museum, New Delhi notable among them being resurrection of Ahilya and 'Lakshmana Mutilating Surpanakha'. In almost all the so-far discovered *Ramayana* panels of the pre-Gupta and Gupta periods, the story of the abduction of Sita figures prominently. Other stone panels from Deogarh depict episodes such as 'Rama Meeting Sugriva', 'the Fight Between Bali and Sugriva', 'the Monkeys Constructing the Bridge Across the Ocean' and so on.

Krishna theme was equally favoured in Bundelkhand. A few stone slabs from the terraced basement of the Dasavatara temple depict episodes from Krishna's life. 'Devaki's handing over baby Krishna to Vasudeva', 'Krishna Kicking at the Milk Cart', 'Krishna Receiving his boyhood friend Sudama', etc., are depicted there.⁶²

The early *Sthanakamurti* of Vishnu are comparatively rare. Some have been found at Kaushambi, Bhita, Udaigiri and Eran. The earliest specimen, an eight-armed Vishnu, from Kaushambi is at present in the State Museum, Lucknow.⁶³ Its left upper side and the portion below the waist are missing. The front right hand is held against the chest, another holds a group of arrows and the two upper ones on the same side hold some indistinct objects. Vishnu wears a crown, ear-rings, torque, bracelets and armlets. Stylistically it can be dated to 2nd-3rd centuries A.D. An epigraphic reference to eight-armed Vishnu, datable to the same period, has been reported from Nagarjunakonda in Andhra Pradesh.

Another early *Sthanakamurti* of Vishnu, although much damaged, is carved in the Varaha cave facade at Udaigiri. As per Inscription the cave was carved during the rule of Chandragupta II. The figure, standing erect, is decked with a long garland (*vanamala*), a crown (*kirita*), a broad necklace and other ornaments. The front hands are broken, the two back hands are resting upon the heads of the two Ayudhapurushas: the right on Gadadevi and the left on Chakrapurusha. There is the *srivatsa* mark on the chest. Here we got the earliest representation of the Ayudhapurushas. Another four-armed Vishnu, carved on the other side of the facade is similar except the attributes (*ayudha*) viz., *gada* and *chakra* which are depicted in their natural form.⁶⁴

A standing figure of Vishnu in *sambhanga* pose, facing front, was recovered from Bhita and is now kept in the Allahabad Museum. It can be ascribed to 4th century A.D. The Mathurasque features of heaviness and frontality would suggest that the figure belongs to the transitional phase when the characteristics of the Kushan sculptures were being absorbed in the Gupta art. The four hands carry a *bijapuraka* (fruit?), a mace, a large discus (*chakra*) and a conch. He wears a cylindrical crown with festoons hanging from a circular plaque, a *vanamala* reaching to the thighs, a plain necklace and ear-rings. The lower garment consists of a plain girdle.⁶⁵

A bust of Vishnu from Gadhwā, datable to the 5th century A.D., now lies in the State Museum, Lucknow. The arms and the lower portion are missing. The figure is devoid of ornamentation except a crown, ear-pendants and necklace. The crown is embossed with the bust of a lion, holding a festoon in his two hands. It is again an ancient motif occurring right from the Kushan period. The *kirtimukha* motif on each side of the crown is emitting bead strings. A plain halo behind the head is well preserved.⁶⁶

A close scrutiny of the earlier *sthanakamurtis* of Vishnu from the Bundelkhand region yield the following iconographic characteristics. The icons are either eight-armed or four-armed, the latter being more common. The two back arms of the Vishnu figures of the Kushan era are raised above the shoulders whereas in the later figures of the Gupta period, the same are shown suspended downwards. The *vanamala*, made of full blossomed flowers, reaches upto thighs. Sacred thread or *yajñopavita* is missing. The *gada* is heavy and held in the upper right hand. However, when it is held in the form of Ayudha-purusha, the back right hand is placed upon Gada Devi. The *chakra*, a multi-spoked wheel with a central knob, is held in the upper left hand. The lower right hand holds a fruit of immortality (?). The conch is held in the lower left hand with four fingers inserted into its channel. The crown is a tight-fitted cap with *kirtimukha* (lion with festoons). The remarkable point is that the *padma* or lotus does not appear at all in these images.

Siva:—Bundelkhand appears to have been a stronghold of Saivism right from the 2nd-1st centuries B.C., if not earlier. A large

number of inscribed and uninscribed early Siva-*lingas* and icons of Siva, Parvati, Skanda and Ganesa have been recovered from all over the region. The magnificent Siva temples, belonging to the 5th century A.D. at Tigawa, Nachana-Kuthara and Bhumara, etc., confirm the popularity of Siva-cult. The clay seals from Bhita, ascribed to Gupta age, throw a welcome light on the subject.

The worship of Siva, prior to the Christian era, included the *mukha-lingas* which were enshrined within the structural temples. The temples with a single door contained *ekamukha linga*, whereas the shrines with four cardinal doors of a cella were meant for the five-headed aspects of Siva. Although, the scholars have put forth divergent views about the philosophy behind the concept of Siva-*lingas* yet the incised marks on some of the examples would probably suggest that they stood for the phallic emblem. The early specimens, however, do not invariably confirm to the above view. Another possibility of *linga* symbolising the Vedic pillar appears to be more convincing in earlier examples. The title of Siva as *sthanu* stood for the pillar concept of *linga*. In this connection, it is worthwhile to refer to the Allahabad Municipal Museum Yupa Inscription of 2nd century A.D. wherein the practice of erecting *Yupas* or the sacrificial pillars has been mentioned.⁶⁷ These *Yupas* were erected by the donor at the same place where a temple of Siva, alongwith the attached garden and a *sattra* was constructed. Thus, Siva seems to be associated with the Vedic rituals and the Siva-*lingas* might have derived their origin from the sacrificial pillars. We do find the flaming pillar in early Indian art.⁶⁸ Sounder Rajan rightly remarks "The Agni cult in the Vedic period merged with the Rudra cult in the late and post-Vedic times resulting in a mutual cosmos, and Siva in *linga* form, was sequel to it. The *linga* form of Siva is nothing but the pristine sacrificial pillar or symbolically the pillar of fire, as described in Mahabharata, and its esoteric overtones, linking with the phallus, was a much later phenomenon".⁶⁹

The earliest example to represent the *panchasya* aspect of Siva is the *panchamukha linga* from Bhita, datable to 2nd century B.C. An inscription in early Brahmi records that the *Linga (lago)* of the sons of Khajahuti was dedicated by Nagasiri, the son of Vasethi (Vasishthi),

may the deity be pleased. Without going into the controversy whether the sculpture is a *linga* or a Memorial column, one would clearly understand that the object in question represented Siva worship, whose four faces are carved therein and whose pleasure has directly been invoked in the inscription. However, the meaning of the phrase, "the *linga* or *lago* of the sons of Khajahuti" is not very clear in the epigraph. Similarly, the bust of the male figure on the top of the sculpture need to be properly identified.

Iconographically, the sculpture exhibits a shaft or pillar with four Siva heads in the north-east, east-south, south-west and west-north directions along with a human bust on the top with two arms, the right hand raised in *abhaya* pose whereas the left one holding a *kamandalu*. Apparently, the sculpture appears to be a *panch-mukha linga* of Siva. Below the human bust on the top, there are two human heads, one with the terrific features such as pointed moustaches and two protruding teeth. The second is a normal face. On the backside there are two heads, one with a turban having a top knot, probably the Kapardin aspect of Siva, and the other with a shaven head. The third eye of Siva is not shown on any of the four faces. The lowermost portion on the front side of the *linga* is engraved with a motif of phallus with testicles.

Now the question arises as what is meant by the phrase, "*linga* of the sons of Khajahuti." Even if the term 'Khajahuti' is a synonym of Siva, the expression 'sons of Khajahuti' does not make any sense. Banerjea has summarised it as the scions of Khajahuti, who might have been the ancestors of the donor, Nagasri.⁷⁰ The interpretation is not very convincing. How could the Siva-*linga* of his ancestors be dedicated by Nagasri? Again, the term 'sons of Khajahuti', stand for *linga* and not for Nagasri, as is mentioned in the epigraph. It was the Siva *linga* which belonged to the scions of Khajahuti.

It has been suggested earlier that the "sons of Khajahuti" may stand for the adherents of some early Saiva sect propounded by Khajahuti, a Saiva teacher.⁷¹ The Siva *linga* in question, may belong to that sect. The Siva *lingas* with the bust of renowned Saiva *acharyas* have been found.⁷² It is not unlikely that the human bust on the top of the Bhita Siva-*linga* represents Acharya Khajahuti, who after his death is

said to have merged into the god-head of Siva. Thus the phrase "sons of Khajahuti" stands for the particular line of Saiva saints who preached the Saiva sect as propounded by their teacher, Khajahuti.

A *Chaturmukha linga* from Kaushambi, datable to the 2nd century A.D. is now in the Allahabad Museum. The four heads are carved around the *linga*, two of them are badly damaged. Out of the remaining two, one wears a turban with a central jewelled pendant on it and the other shows Siva in fierce mood with protruding teeth and moustache.⁷³ This *linga* presents the Aghora, Usnisin, Yogi and probably Uma forms. Like the Bhita *linga*, the faces here are facing south-east, east-north, north-west and west-south respectively.

Another *Chaturmukha linga* from Kaushambi, datable to the 5th century A.D., is housed in the State Museum, Lucknow.⁷⁴ This beautiful and fairly preserved sculpture of the Gupta age exhibits some novel features of Siva. Here the four faces are set on all the four cardinal points and represent the four well known aspects, viz., Aghora, Tatpurusha, Sadyojata and Vamadeva, the last is traditionally depicted as that of a female with two eyes only. The facial features such as the curved eyebrows; nicely arranged hair and the fine modelling are suggestive of the Gupta art. The crescent mark on the forehead (*balendu*) and the third eye of the Lord are well conceived.

An *ekamukha Siva linga* from Khoh, Satna District, is in the Allahabad Museum. This masterpiece of the Gupta art in Bundelkhand has been ascribed to the 5th century A.D. The head is emerging from the smooth cylindrical form of the *linga*. The god wears an *ekavali* and ear-rings, extending down from the ear-lobes. The *jatajuta* is nicely arranged into two tiers, divided in the centre by a horizontally running central cord. The short curls of hair are falling downwards on both sides, reaching upto the shoulders. A crescent moon is placed on the front portion of *jatajuta*. The vertical third eye is clearly incised in the middle of the forehead of the deity. The deep set eyes with narrow eyelids, sensuous lips and the radiant glow of the peaceful countenance of the deity are the characteristics of Siva's iconography of the Gupta period. Numerous *ekamukha lingas* are found from Bhumara, Nachna, Kuthara and Khoh.⁷⁵

The Saivism was more popular in the eastern regions of Bundelkhand. Many inscriptions, *Siva lingas* and icons of Siva and Parvati have been traced from Kosam, Bhita, Bhumara and Khoh which proves that the Saiva sect had major influence in the early centuries of the Christian era. A masterly carved sculpture of Siva and Parvati in relief from Kosam, datable to the 2nd century A.D. presently in the Indian Museum, Calcutta shows Siva and Parvati, standing side by side, each with the right hand raised in *abhaya mudra*. The left hand of Siva holds a water vessel while the left hand of Parvati carries a trident (?). The *jatajuta* of Siva is fashioned in typical Kaushambi style, consisting of upraised, finely braided hair tied in the middle and falling backward. Siva wears ear-pendants, *ekavali* and an *yajñopavita*, which is a novel feature. The sacred thread (*yajñopavita*) is generally not found in early figures of Mathura. The lower garment, *dhoti*, is extending upto the knees with a tassel in front. The *uttariya* is passing beneath the left shoulder and encircling round the body to fall on the front left arm of the deity. A notable iconographic feature is the third eye which is placed vertically on the middle of the forehead. The deity is shown *urdharetas* with the male organ raised upward. The goddess, Parvati is wearing a similar dress except the headdress which is shown as a tightly fitted cap with prominent rosettes on either side. She wears ear-pendants, necklace, bangles, a *mekhala* and heavy anklets. Both the figures look young and energetic. This is the earliest example of Siva with Uma in Indian art.

Siva as Nataraja was quite popular in Bundelkhand. A dancing figure of Siva in red sandstone from Nachna Kuthara is now exhibited in the National Museum, New Delhi. The long curly locks of hair are falling on the shoulders. He wears armlets and wristlets. Out of the four hands, only the upper right and left ones are still intact. The upper right hand holds a *damaru*, which the Lord is playing while dancing in full ecstasy. The half-opened, drooping eyes suggest the full concentration in dance. The figure, datable to the fifth century A.D. is an excellent piece of Gupta art. Another figure of Siva from Tumain, near Gwalior, in the National Museum, New Delhi, shows him dancing in *tribhanga pose*. Out of the eight hands of the deity,

only the two back right ones are preserved, the upper one holding a snake and the lower one playing with the *damaruka*. The mount, Nandi, is seated at the back and is watching the dance in rapt attention.

A large number of clay seals depicting Saiva motifs were discovered from the excavations of Bhita. Banerjea recognised an *Ardhanarisvara* form of Siva in a Gupta seal impression found from Bhita.⁷⁶ It was, in the Gupta age that most of the *lilamurtis* of Siva were produced. In the Uma-Mahesvara form in clay form Bhita, Siva and Parvati are seated side by side on a throne. Siva is sitting cross-legged whereas the legs of Parvati hang down. The mounts bull and lion, are seated in front of the throne.

An archaeological reference to Jainism in the region comes from Udaigiri Cave Inscription dated in G.E. 106 (A.D. 425-26), which refers to the installation of an image of the Tirthankara Parsva (or Parsvanatha) at the mouth of the cave by the Gupta emperor, Kamaragupta.⁷⁷ Earlier three inscribed Jain Tirthankara images from Durjanapura, near Vidisa, also refer to the installation of these statues by *Maharajadhiraj* Ramagupta. Out of these three, one is identified as Chandraprabha and the second as Pushpadanta. The third one could not be identified. Thus Jainism had already established its hold in the central and eastern regions of Bundelkhand during the 4th century A.D. There might have been some structural Jain shrines in the region during the Gupta age.

There was notable Jain establishment at Sira Pahari, near Nachna in Panna District. A number of images from there are now preserved in the Tulsi Museum at Ramban in Satna District of Madhya Pradesh. Besides, a standing image of a Tirthankara, belonging to the Gupta age, was recovered from Besnagar and the same is now exhibited in the Gwalior Museum.

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4. *CII*, III, No. 11, p. 46.
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6

ART

The art of Bundelkhand, like that of any other region reflects the socio-religious traits, economic conditions in their changing context and the people's behaviour. The unique topographical factors, developed land, water routes and hilly ranges played a vital role in determining the medium, forms and traditions of the indigenous art. Added to this, the alien influences due to the constant influx of foreign invaders through the north-western frontiers of India made their impact and introduced new concepts. The artisans and craftsmen of Bundelkhand imbibed alien techniques, motifs and designs and moulded them to meet the requirements of the local inhabitants. Hence the art of Bundelkhand exhibits the common upsurge of the people at large, including kings, nobles, priestly class, business community and the peasantry, who strived hard and offered their best to lay down norms and develop early forms of Indian architecture and sculpture, which were first experimented in Madhyadesa and later transmitted to the nearby regions of Uttar Pradesh, Malwa, Rajasthan and Andhra.

The ancient architecture in Bundelkhand region was inspired by the sectarian needs of the society. The free standing pillars of Asoka with carved abacus and animal-shaped capitals may be treated more as sculpture than architecture. It was the sectarian necessity that Asoka got these magnificent columns constructed to propagate the tenets of his newly conceived *Dhamma*. Yet the Asokan columns, howsoever majestic and monumental in character, did not fulfil the inherent religious aspirations of the people of the Buddhist creed, wherein the monastic establishment required frequent assembly of the lay-worshippers to hear religious discourses and have *darshan* of the

stupa, which symbolised the Master. Hence the immediate need of the Buddhist Order was to construct spacious *Chaitya* halls and the *Viharas*, where the devotees could congregate and perform their daily rituals. Similarly, the wandering Buddhist *acharyas*, who were prohibited by the Order to enter the cities and villages, needed rock-shelters to spend the four months of the rainy season. It prompted the construction of early rock-cut caves. The Vedic or early Brahmanical cult, which originally prescribed only the recitation of *mantras* or the *Puja* of an image in a portable shrine by an individual, did not warrant for the construction of spacious halls or the free standing structures in the initial stages. This is probably the reason that we do not find many early examples of Hindu architecture, preceding the Christian era. It was only after the advent of the *Bhakti* cult that the concepts of Hindu Trinity and the *Parivara-devatas* of each individual god were evolved which necessitated independent structural shrines in Hinduism.

ARCHITECTURE

Early inscriptional evidence is silent about the construction of free standing, structural Hindu shrines. There are, of course, references to the Buddhist *stupas* at Bharhut and Sanchi and so also about the rock-out caves at Pabhosa, in Allahabad District¹. This conspicuous absence of any archaeological evidence suggests that the concept of independent structural temples had not yet fully evolved in Bundelkhand region. No doubt, a large number of sculptured panels from Bharhut depict free standing structures, representing the religious as well as secular buildings. The *prasadas*, *kuti* and *punya Salas*, as mentioned in the associated short labels, are probably the religious shrines, giving an idea of the structural temples of the Sunga period. The panel showing *Vijayanta Prasada* or the palace of the *Devas*, depicts a three-storeyed building, wherein the basement area is shown as an open pillared hall. The upper storeys are encircled by the Buddhist railings. The arched openings, either two or three, are modelled on the pattern of the facades of early rock-cut caves of the Maurya period². The *kuti* was a single storeyed structure, having an arched doorway and a domed roof, as in the case of Kaushambi *kuti*,

and sometimes with the gable ends, as in the case of *Gandha kuti*³. The *Punya Sala* of Raja Prasenajita was a double storeyed structure, with the lower storey depicted as an open pillared hall with a railing around. The upper storey had a semi-cylindrical domed roof with two gable ends.⁴ The upper structure of these religious shrines might have been built of timber. In other words, the arched doorway and the gabled roof of the Western Indian cave-architecture might have been borrowed from the earlier wooden architecture of early Sunga age.

The Buddhist architecture exemplified by the *chaityas* and *viharas* had an earlier beginning which was based purely on the sectarian guidelines. Right from the days of the Buddha, the Buddhist cult was evolved as a monastic Order, where the *bhikshus* were required to dwell in the monasteries under the strict discipline of the Faith. Even the lay worshippers had occasionally to perform the collective mode of worship and rituals. Hence it was the sectarian necessity to construct the spacious pillared halls (*viharas*) for the congregation and worship. Kaushambi had many *viharas* for the *bhikshus*. In order to avoid idol-worship, the Buddha granted permission to adore the *Saririka*, *Uddesika* and *Pari-bhogika* objects the suggestion that was responsible for the origin of the Buddhist *stupas*, which symbolised the Great Decease of the Master. During Asoka's time the construction of the *stupas* got a boost and a large number of them came up in whole of Madhyadesa and the lower Krishna Valley. During the Sungas, the successors of the Mauryas, a systematic enlargement and beautification of the Buddhist *stupas* took place. Bundelkhand was first to take lead in this direction and the famous Bharhut *stupa* proved to be the forerunner of the future Buddhist architectural activity in the country.

Remains of the free standing structural temples, built of brick and timber, have been excavated from the regions of Rajasthan and eastern Malwa. A circular brick and timber shrine, datable to the 3rd century B.C., was recovered through excavation at Bairat, near Jaipur in Rajasthan.⁵ The roof and a small portico in front were supported by wooden pillars. The shrine No. 40, at Sanchi shows an apsidal plan and a wooden superstructure. Similarly, the Temple No. 18 at Sanchi, datable to the 2nd century B.C. exhibits an apsidal plan

with wooden superstructure.⁶ A Vaishnavite temple at Besnagar had an elliptical plan and possibly a wooden roof.⁷ The aforesaid examples suggest that the Hindus too followed suit of the Buddhists and developed the concept of collective mode of worship during the 2nd century B.C. and, for this purpose, they adopted the earlier form of architecture of the Buddhist edifices. If we accept the analogy of the so far known early architectural models, it may be inferred that the superstructures of the earliest Hindus shrines might have been of three *viz.*, hemispherical, oblong or cubical and the gable-roofed (inverted boat-shaped). The material used for the construction was brick, stone and timber. It may further be pointed out that the earliest temple from Sanchi also exhibits an apsidal plan which seems to have been borrowed from the earlier Buddhist architecture of the region.

The Brahmanical faith which derived its flesh and blood from the Vedic rituals and philosophy, prescribed the erection of *yupas* or the stone columns to perform various sacrifices. The Allahabad Museum Yupa Inscription informs about the erection of seven *yupas* in connection with the performance of seven *soma* sacrifices.⁸ The inscription can be dated to the 2nd century A.D. It was customary to instal the figures of gods and goddesses in the open at public places, tanks or ponds where people could take bath and perform their religious rituals. A Kosam inscription of Bhadramagha's reign (year 81) mentions that the devotees used to set up *asana-pattas* or the pedestals for the images to be installed at the bathing *ghats*.⁹ A similar Inscription of a Magha king (year 87), mentions about the erection of *asana-pattas* for an image of a goddess at a pond to ensure religious merit for his family.¹⁰ It is thus clear that the images of Hindu gods and goddesses were often installed in the open, without any superstructure during the reign of the Maghas. The railings were constructed around the deity. An inscription from Kosam, written in Brahmi characters, reveals that a certain householder named Kusapala got a railing constructed for the figure of Yaksha Manibhadra, during 1st-2nd centuries A.D.¹¹

BUDDHIST ARCHITECTURE

Kaushambi was an earlier centre where a large establishment of

the Theravadins had come up. Asoka got constructed innumerable *stupas* and *viharas* with more durable material such as the bricks and stone for the benefit of the Buddhist *acharyas* and the lay worshippers. The *stupa* of Bharhut was probably the first of its kind to have been constructed in Madhyadesha.

Asoka had a thorough knowledge of the topography of the Bundelkhand. As a regal prince he might have crossed through the regions of Bundelkhand as and when he visited Ujjaini from Pataliputra. After ascending the royal throne he went on his official tours to Bundelkhand and issued royal charters for the propagation of his *Dhamma*.¹² Bharhut, which is situated on the ancient land route from Ujjain and Vidisa to Pataliputra, must have invited the attention of Asoka as this tract of land was inhabited by people of tribal character. The great Mauryan emperor probably observed the age-old rituals and superstitions prevalent amongst the aboriginals and decided to bring them into the fold of Buddhism. Hence, he got the Minor Rock edicts engraved at Gujarra (Datia District) and Rupanath (Jabalpur Distt.), which lie within the ancient boundaries of Bundelkhand. It was only after two and a half years since Asoka was influenced by Buddhism and a little more than a year when he started exerting himself for the propagation of the Faith, that the Gujarra and Rupanath Minor Rock edicts were engraved. It, is thus, clear that Asoka started his religious mission from Sahasram in Bihar, where the first edict was engraved. Later, he came to Bundelkhand and got two edicts engraved for the benefit of aboriginals. In all probability it was during this period that the Bharhut *Stupa* was first constructed with bricks and lime plaster. Of course, the railings and the gateways were added during the later phase of the Sunga regime.

The *Stupa* of Bharhut is situated at the foot of a hill called *Lal Pahar* or the Red Hill. The dark red sandstone of carved panels, which formed a part of the massive gateway and railings, must have been quarried locally. When Cunningham first visited the place in 1873-74 the major part of the *Stupa* had already been destroyed by the neighbouring villagers. Cunningham could recover only portions of the magnificently carved stone railing and the Eastern Gateway. Some stray fragments, which were recovered from the neighbouring areas,

also formed part of the *Stupa*. At present, the bulk of the remains of the Bharhut *Stupa* are preserved in the Indian Museum, Calcutta.

The Main *Stupa* of Bharhut was made of bricks and finished with a coat of plaster on the exterior. As known from the excavated ground plan and from various pictorial representations carved on railings and gateway, the Main *Stupa* of Bharhut consisted of a cylindrical base or drum (*medhi*) and a hemispherical dome (*anda*) above. The lower half of the drum was quite plain, whereas the upper half was decked with a succession of triangular-shaped recesses which might have been used for keeping the lamps for exterior illumination. A balustrade which encircled an upper processional path around the spring of the dome, as at the great *Stupa* I of Sanchi, seems to have existed initially.¹³ The surface of the dome was decorated all over with floral motifs and scroll work. On the top there existed a square platform encircled by a railing with *harmika*. The lower portion of the drum, with a diameter of 20.65 m., was ornamented with a series of mouldings and decorative designs. Above it, there stood a railing which surrounded the base of the dome. The interior diameter of the stone railing was 26.95 m. The *pradakshinapatha* around the *Stupa* (between the base of the *Stupa* and the railing) was 3.15 m. The *Stupa* was built of the square bricks, measuring 30.5 cm. × 30.5 cm × 9.0 cm.

The great stone railing and the gateway (toranas) at the four cardinal points were constructed at a later date. The railing (*vedika*) along with the four return entrance railings was planned as a large *swastika* around the *stupa*. It was composed of a series of monolithic stone pillars, 2.16 m. in height, which were joined together by three parallel sets of lenticular cross-bars (*suchi*) on either side and covered by a massive stone coping above. The railing was divided into four quadrants, each consisting of sixteen pillars including the two terminus pillars at right angles of each quadrant. Each opening stood between one of the terminus pillar of two adjacent quadrants. From the right hand terminus pillar of each quadrant, the railing was extended outward for two further pillars. Spaces at right angles to form an L-shaped fence provided a direct approach to the *Stupa*. The right hand terminus pillar of each quadrant thus became the corner pillar from which the return railing or the L-shaped fence originated. The return

thus consisted of four pillars of which one formed a corner pillar, the other terminus pillar, and the remaining two being intermediate pillars. The railing consisted of a total number of eighty pillars, including the twenty pillars of each quadrant. The outer space of each terminus pillar was carved with life-size figures of Yakshas, Yakshinis, Nagas or Devatas. The remaining intermediate pillars of the railing of four quadrant had mortices on two sides for the crossbars and spaces for sculptures on their inner and outer faces.

Out of the four gateways at the terminus pillars of each quadrant, only the Eastern Gateway has survived. It consists of curiously shaped pillars supporting an ornamental arch (*torana*) with a total height of 6.86 m. The bases of the pillars are square in section upto a height of 46.00 cms, whence the shafts are chiselled in octagonal shape. The four octagons of the pillars are joined together and crowned by four distinct bell capitals. The four litiform bell capitals are covered by a single abacus which is again surmounted by a massive capital formed of two winged lions and two winged bulls, seated back to back. The two half lotuses crowned by the "honey-suckle" motif exhibit two lions with leonine faces whereas the inner side represents two lions with human faces. Similarly, the southern pillar on its outer face shows two bulls (faces of the bulls broken) and the inner face of the same pillar is carved with two lions, one of them having a face of bird and the face of the other being mutilated.

The animal capitals support the superstructure of the *toranas* which consists of three massive architraves, placed one above the other by means of square blocks of stone and multiple small balusters and figure pillasters. The architraves are shaped as natural *bandan-wars*, that is, their middle portion, between the two supporting pillars, is slightly curved with their projecting ends shaped as spirals. The projecting ends are carved with curled tails. Out of the three architraves, the lowermost is placed direct on the animal capitals of the two supporting pillars. The two upper architraves are separated from one another by means of square blocks or dados placed between them. The long empty spaces between the central curved parts of the architraves are filled with a number of small balusters and pillars statues placed alternately. The pinnacle, placed on the top

of the *torana*, consisted of a nine-petalled 'honey-suckle' arising out of a half lotus.

The difference in architecture between the Bharhut *Stupa* and those of Sanchi and Amaravati is significant to know the gradual evolution of early Buddhist architecture.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE BHARHUT STUPA

There is no chronological evidence available to ascertain the date of the *Stupa* of Bharhut. It is, however, certain that the *Stupa* had attained considerable eminence and popularity at the time of construction of its railing which bears the names of a large number of donors coming from distant places like Vidisa Karhakata (Karhad in Satara Distt.), Nasik, Kaushambi and Pataliputra etc. This suggests that the *Stupa* was built earlier than the railing. It must have taken considerable time for the *stupa* to earn countrywide reputation and attract devotees from far-off places to come to Bharhut on pilgrimage and contribute for the railings (Cunningham's inner railing). Keeping this in mind, it will be safer to determine the date of construction of the railing and then allow sufficient margin of time for the construction of the *stupa* and its wide-spread popularity in those days of the restricted means of transport and communication.

A large number of votive inscriptions engraved on the railing are written in the Prakrit that differs from the Prakrit of Asokan inscriptions. The railing inscriptions fall into two distinct groups, the one belonging to a date prior to that of the gateway inscriptions and the other being contemporaneous with them. In fact, the characters of the former group of railing inscriptions are similar to those of the Besnagar Garuda Pillar Inscription of Heliodoros, envoy of Antialkidas. The Indo-Greek King, Antialkidas ruled over Taxila during the middle of the second century B.C. The scholars generally place the Heliodoros Inscription near around 125 B.C. Hence, the date of the railing of Bharhut *Stupa* should be placed roughly between 150 to 125 B.C.

Paleographically, the Brahmi characters of the *torana* inscription of Dhanabhuti exhibit a definite advance as compared to those of the railing inscriptions. An adequate margin of about four decades

must be allowed for such a paleographic change. So the construction of the *torana* might have taken place sometime during the first quarter of 1st century B.C. (roughly 80 B.C.) A few inscriptions on some of the pillars and cross-bars, which bear later characteristics, must be assigned to the period of repairs and replacement of the older parts of the railing.

There is no evidence to associate this *Stupa* with Asoka. On the contrary, the epigraphic records on the gateways prove that the same were constructed during the rule of the later Sunga chiefs. The paleography of some of the early inscriptions on the railing suggest that the earlier part of the railing was constructed during the third quarter of the second century B.C. However, the early architectural features of the proper *Stupa*, its countrywide popularity during the construction period of the rail and its affiliation with the early Hinayana sect would prompt one to ascribe the date of construction of the Bharhut *Stupa* to Asokan period.

HINDU ARCHITECTURE

Some of the early Gupta temples, probably constructed during the period of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II, mark the beginning of grand architectural styles of mediaeval India. A large number of early structural shrines at Nachna Kuthara, Gadhwa and Khoh, etc., probably made of stone and bricks, have disappeared and they are to be known only through their inscrip-tional and architectural remains. For example, there stood a magnificently carved shrine of vishnu at Gadhwa, which attracted devotees from far-off places during the rule of Chandragupta II and Kumaragupta I.¹⁴ The temple exists no more, except its archi-tectural remains which bear the testimony of a high perfection and exquisiteness of the art of stone carving of that age. The other early Gupta temples at Sanchi, Tigawa and Eran, still well preserved, consist of a tiny square or rectangular chamber and a pillared porch in front, both covered by a flat roof. The pillars of the portico of the Gupta temple at Sanchi are marked for their so-called "bell" capitals. These simple and archaic forms of early Hindu temples in Bundelkhand region seem to have been copied from the earlier rock-cut shrines, similar to the ones existing at Udaigiri in Madhya

Pradesh. Krishna Deva, while dealing with the characteristic features of the early Gupta temples in Central India, remarks, "As suggested by the flat roof, square or rectangular in form, the plain treatment of the walls and modestness of size, these temples must obviously have been derived from rock-cut prototypes of which early Gupta examples occur at Udaigiri near Sanchi"¹⁵.

The majority of the earlier Hindu shrines did not have independent structures but consisted of mainly the enclosures or a railing around the object of worship.¹⁶ For instance, the religious shrine of the gods Sankarshana and Vasudeva, called *Narayana-Vatika* was nothing but an enclosure or an open quadrangle having a grand stone railing around and a stone slab (*puja sila*) in the centre. Later on, the four gateways were added to the railing as mentioned in the Mathura lintel inscription. The practice seems to have been continued even during the early centuries of the Christian era. A Brahmi inscription from Kosam describes the erection of a stone railing around an image of Manibhadra Yaksha by the householder, Gotiputa, who belonged to the family of a caravan-merchants.¹⁷ During the subsequent centuries of the Christian era, the railing seems to have been replaced by the raised platform or *Jagati* upon which the shrine was constructed. The one or four gateways of the earlier railings are represented by the one or four entrances of the *garbha-griha* of the Hindu-temple. The construction of this simple but new form of early Hindu temple goes to the credit of the talented artists of Bundelkhand. As Soundara Rajan has pointed out, "They would appear to have independent, regional and local genesis and motivation, and excepting where iconography or pillar motifs are concerned, are not all of the same structural milieu"¹⁸.

Broadly speaking, the chronology and gradual evolution of the Gupta style of temples in Bundelkhand region can be traced through the development of plan and the ornamentation on the pillars and the door frame, the latter introducing new decorative motifs. The two earlier examples of the Gupta architecture are the one at Sanchi (No. 17) and the other at Tigawa, near Jabalpur, in Madhya Pradesh. Both these Brahmanical temples can be assigned to the first half of the fifth century A.D. Although, the general plan and proportions of

both the shrines are almost similar conforming to the characteristic norms of early Gupta style yet the temple at Sanchi exhibits a vital difference in the design of its pillars which are based on earlier Buddhist tradition. Here the 'bell-shaped' capitals are decidedly reminiscent of earlier Buddhist architecture which had its beginning in the Mauryan age. In spite of their best efforts to deviate from the earlier Buddhist architecture, the Gupta artists of Sanchi could not resist the temptation of copying the capital from the earlier Buddhist columns. On the contrary, the pillar capitals of the temple from Tigawa are designed as *purnakumbha* or the 'Vase of Plenty', motif which represents an altogether different concept. Hence the Gupta temple at Sanchi, inspite of its well-developed, co-ordinated plan and original appearance, exhibits a continuity of the earlier tradition of the bell-shaped capital which was evolved in the Mauryan period, particularly with the monolithic columns of Asoka. The same tradition continued at Bharhut. The Gupta temple at Sanchi is the last and final bid of the Sanchi artists to continue the tradition. Thereafter the bell-capital has been completely replaced by the *purnakumbha* motif.

The Tigawa temple in the southern-most region of Bundelkhand initiates the beginning of a new concept, style and tradition which were the outcome of new Brahmanical revival in Madhyadesa. A simple and unassuming form of the Tigawa temple consists of a square structure of $12\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide with a cella of eight feet diameter and the seven feet long portico in front. The treatment of inter-columnation provides wider interval for the middle columns than for those on either side. The pillars are composed of a plain square pedestal, the multi-sided shaft, capital in the shape of *purnakumbha* with sprouting foliage and a massive abacus with lions on top. The richly carved doorway with its expanded overdoor, which is again reminiscent of earlier timber tradition, exhibits the river goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna on their respective mounts, carved on upper ends, instead of the base of the door-posts, which is a subsequent feature of early Gupta architecture. The other Gupta temples at Eran, Bhumara and Nachna in Bundelkhand region belong to a slightly later date.

At a distance of about half a mile from the present town of Eran, there are the remains of an early Gupta temple of Mahavishnu, the tutelary deity of the Gupta emperors. The temple can be ascribed to the reign of Chandragupta II. The 'bell-capital' motif on the pillars occurring here is an early characteristic of the Gupta architecture. The buttress-like projections in the middle of each of the three faces of the temple, corresponding to the projection of the doorway in front, are of later date.¹⁹ The Mahavishnu temple at Eran exhibits an evolved plan with its sanctum having a central offset on the cardinal faces (except at the front). The doorframe and porch pillars are the later additions of the Pratihara period.

The early Brahmanical shrines in Bundelkhand mark a great departure from the earlier style of the Buddhist architecture. The reasons for this sudden and marked change in art style of early Gupta period are not far to seek. The paramountcy of the Gupta monarchs, the staunch devotees of the new Bhagavat cult, had given a major setback to Buddhism which had been dominating the art and architecture of India in the past six hundred years. It was an era of Brahmanical revival wherein the 'Trinity' viz., Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, emerged as a great force to infuse new blood and energy in the Vedic cult. The new concepts of Hindu art and architecture, deriving their strength in the form of new symbolism, motifs and designs from the Vedic philosophy, were in the process of being evolved. The 'surplus' produce out of increasing trade and industry of the Gupta age gave birth to a new affluent Middle class and the members of this rich community made a fervent bid to reject the existing Buddhist traits and traditions and evolve new concepts and forms in a more durable material *i.e.*, stone, to present a fresh look to Hinduism. The enlightened priestly class was busy in introducing fresh rites and rituals which could attract masses and bring them to the folds of new Brahmanical Faith. The early Hindu architecture of the Gupta era is, thus, an outcome of this changing social Order.

It is, therefore, logical to trace the origin of early Gupta architecture from the nearby existing examples which owe their existence to this neo-Brahmanical Faith. In this context, the rock-cut caves at Udaigiri are of considerable significance. The nine built-in

caves at Udaigiri, situated at a distance of two miles from Besnagar and five from Sanchi, were hewn out of a sandstone hill during the latter half of fourth century A.D. These are partly rock-cut and partly stone built Hindu shrines, which consist of plain rectangular cells, similar to the sanctum of early structural temples of Gupta period, and the rock facades, which are in the design of the pillared porticos that were built in front of them. The cave No. 1 of the series, the 'False Cave' as it is called, exhibits its facade in a well preserved and intact condition. There the early characteristic features of Gupta style of architecture, such as the flat roof, massive string course and row of four Pillars with the wider intercolumnation in the "Vase and foliage" pattern are discernible. The remaining caves at Udaigiri are based on similar principles of construction. The richly carved facades with excellent independent sculptures display the high quality of craftsmanship.

The second group of temples viz., the Parvati Temple at Nachna (Distt. Panna in M.P.), Siva Temple at Bhumara (Distt. Satna in M.P.) and a few others in Central India, are ascribed to a slightly later date.²⁰ They exhibit additions and alterations in the earlier plan since that was later found inadequate to meet the growing need of the rituals and so also to provide amenities to the devotees. By this time, the practice of going round the exterior of the temple before entering into it (*pradakshina*) was also developed. Hence, an addition of roofed ambulatory round the sanctum was considered necessary. The circumambulatory path was lighted by providing trellises in the ambulatory. The concept of *Parivara Devatas* or the subsidiary deities of the main presiding *deva* evolved so the small independent chambers by the side of the main entrance of the shrine were necessary to house these secondary gods and goddesses hence the plan of the temples of this group consists of two squares: the inner and smaller one that of the sanctum and the larger one, belonging to the covered ambulatory.

The Parvati Temple of Nachna Kuthara bears many characteristics which could be noticed in the earlier group of temples. Even the technique of carving of the sculptural decor on the facade is reminiscent of earlier rock-cutting technique. The new feature of the Nachna Kuthara temple is the two trellises in the two side walls

of the inner sanctum. It adds a novel feature by providing an upper storey above the inner sanctum. The doorway opens in the *pradakshinapatha* and the inner sanctum is in a line with the flight of steps in front. The temple is designed with a simpler plan, consisting of a square building of fifteen feet wide, with a cella of eight and a half feet in diameter. The square platform below is thirty-five feet wide, extended frontward to a length of twelve feet where it is approached by a short flight of steps. The surrounding enclosed passage is lighted with the side trellises. The facade is carved with simple decorative motifs and the figures of birds and animals. There are sculptured niches and continuous relief work to break the monotony.

The Siva Temple at Bhumara is built on the principle of the flat roof and a pillared portico in front. It exhibits almost the same proportions and plan as those of the Parvati Temple. It does not however include the upper story, as in the case of the latter example. The wall and the roof of the once covered passage of the Bhumara Temple have now disappeared, leaving an open promenade yet, the temple is notable for introducing two smaller shrines on the flanks of the entrance steps, a design which seems to have been taken up and perfected at Deogarh at a slightly later date.

Ingenuity, craftsmanship and high skill of the artisans of Bundelkhand has been elaborately exhibited in the Dashavatara Temple at Deogarh in Lalitpur District of Uttar Pradesh. This unique specimen, datable to the 6th century A.D. incorporates the finer aspects of earlier group of temples built at Nachna and Bhumara on one hand and lays foundations for the future Shikhara type of temples of Northern India on the other. Here the concept of *panchayatana* or the quincunx type, earlier initiated at Bhumara Temple has been fully evolved by providing four subsidiary shrines in each corner. Besides it sheds off the earlier convention of 'flat roof' and replaces it by the rudimentary form of *shikhara* or the pyramidal tower, which later became the most characteristic feature of the North Indian style of temple architecture. The style was fully developed and perfected later at Khajuraho near Chhatarpur in Bundelkhand region.

The Deogarh Temple stands on a raised platform, approached by flight of steps on the four sides. The platform is decorated with sculptural panels between pilasters, representing themes from the great Epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The plain walls on the three sides of the *triratha* sanctum are relieved by sculptured niches, showing the panels of Shesashayi, Gajendramoksha and Nara-Narayana. The upper portions of the walls of the sanctum are carved with a frieze of miniature arched niches between a double cornice from which rises the *sikhara* consisting of blocks or tiers of gradually receding height. The dilapidated condition of the tower, however, does not permit to have the complete idea of its original form.

The richly carved doorway of the Deogarh temple requires a special mention. No doubt, the design of the doorway is based on the common style of the Gupta era yet the profuse ornamentation and added decorative motifs endow it with majestic grace. An unique form of a pavilion archway with pilasters supporting an architrave above results into a solid frame with adequate sobriety and charm. The same architectural design and ornamentation has been repeated on the three remaining sides of the building, leaving behind the sunken panels of five feet height and four feet width to house the three majestic religious sculptures in high relief. As Percy Brown rightly puts it, "when complete, this building was unquestionably one of rare merit in the correct ordering of its parts, all alike serving the purpose of practical utility, yet imbued with supreme artistic feeling. Few monuments can show such a ripeness and rich refinement in its sculptural effect as the Gupta Temple at Deogarh."²¹

The Dashavatara Temple exhibits the high attainments of the Bundelkand artisans. A novelty introduced in the Deogarh Temple is the use of iron dowels to join together the well cut and finely dressed blocks of stone to raise the structure. So far the blocks of stone were put one over the other without any mortar, indicating the balance and unfailing skill of the dry masonry.

SCULPTURE

The two notable Asokan columns, viz., the Allahabad Pillar which bears the Asokan edict and the Kosam Pillar whose capital is lost, provide the earliest evidence of the plastic art of Bundelkhand. It need not be presumed that the columns were fashioned at Kaushambi, the then provincial seat of Mauryan power. The so far discovered Asokan columns, with their tall and tapering monolithic shafts, the arched bell or inverted lotus capital, the square or circular abacus, the crowning animal figures and lustrous Mauryan polish, are probably the products of a court-art, which reflect a uniform royal policy. Again the similarity of material in grey sandstone quarried from the Chunar region, near Mirzapur in U.P. suggest that the columns were worked out by a set of trained court sculptures who were supplied with the raw material, and the specifications which were strictly followed. It stood for the great Imperial Will to glorify the *Dhamma* which aimed at the spiritual uplift of the common people. These were the *dharmastambhas*,²² so there was little scope for the artists to introduce any change, in form or features of the columns. All the columns were fashioned at the court workshop, probably Sarnath, which is not too far from the Chunar region, and were brought to be installed at different flourishing centres of Buddhism during the Asokan period.

The great *Uttarapatha* connected the Silk-Route with Indian sub-continent. N.R. Ray suggests, "It was along this route that foreigners including Greek envoys, traders, travellers, artists and craftsmen must have travelled to Maurya India in such numbers as to oblige the State to maintain a department to look after their comfort and well-being."²³ The probable Achaemenian influence on Mauryan art is reflected by the stone pillars which once supported the wooden roof of the Mauryan palace, excavated near Pataliputra.²⁴ These pillars are more or less like the Asokan columns; hewn out of the Chunar stone and bearing the same lustrous polish. It has generally been suggested by the scholars that the Maurya pillared hall at Pataliputra was constructed after the plan of the

Achaemenian Hall of Public Audience at Persepolis.²⁵ The form and style of the Asokan edicts also exhibit an unmistakable Achaemenian impact. It is further believed that the bell-shaped capitals, the twisted rope design, the bead-reel-cable design, the acanthus leaf and palmette designs and the crowning animals of the Asokan columns are all derived from the Achaemenian and Hellenistic art or the so-called common West Asian Heritage.²⁶

It does not, however, mean that the Achaemenian or Hellenistic artisans were brought to reproduce the Persian and Greek concept, design and motifs in Maurya-art. It need not be denied that the artists and craftsmen working for the Maurya-court were familiar with the West-Asian and Hellenistic art-traditions. Yet, a discerning eye will not fail to notice the major technical disparity existing between the Persepolitan and Maurya pillars. The crowning animals of Asokan columns present a somewhat different anatomical features and form as compared to their Iranian and West-Asian counterparts. In fact, the construction of free-standing, ornamented wooden columns was an ancient tradition in Indian art. It stood as an Imperial insignia, suggesting probably the ascending power of an emperor. The crowning animals, wheel, palmette and other motifs represented different symbolic meanings.²⁷ The carved panel of Chakravarti Mandhata from Jaggayyapeta, assigned to 2nd century B.C., contains a free-standing pillar surmounted by the Wheel, which represents universal sovereignty.

Thus, Asoka, erected numerous columns to proclaim his sovereignty and Faith. The pillars unearthed from the Mauryan palace at Pataliputra, however, possess different features as compared to those of the pillared halls of Persepolis. The Maurya columns of pillared hall are without capitals whereas the Achaemenian pillars are decked with ornate capitals. Unlike the Achaemenian pillars, the Maurya columns are without any base below. The bell-shaped capital of Asokan columns is derived from an inverted lotus design which is an ancient Indian art-motif. Besides, the Asokan columns are monolithic whereas the Iranian pillars are built of separate segments of stone. The crowning animals of the Asokan columns,

even the couchant lion, have nothing in common with their Iranian counterparts, so far as their modelling is concerned.

The free standing shafts and crowning animals of the Asokan columns suggest a long history, experience of carving and plastic vision behind them. How is it that we don't find a single such specimen, datable to pre-Maurya period, to claim the historicity of early Indian artistic tradition of such high workmanship? A good number of excavated sites at Bhita, Lauriya, Bulandibagh and Kumarahar, etc., suggest that the pre-Mauryan plastic art was practised mainly in wood, metal and clay and not in stone. The stone as a medium of architecture and sculpture in India was popularised by the Asokan court artisans. Still we do have from the above sites the terracotta figures, metal specimens and objects carved out of wood, datable to pre-Asokan period. A small gold plaque, showing a nude female, probably the Earth Goddess, was found from a tomb near Lauriya by Bloch who assigned it to the 8th or 7th century B.C.²⁸. Similarly, a large number of terracotta figures of the Mother Goddess were unearthed by Marshall at Bhita.²⁹ These plastic forms are of considerable significance to study the beginning of the sculptural art in India. Even if the metal and clay figures found from Indus valley are not accepted to mark the beginning of the historic plastic vision of Indian artisans due to the long and interrupted time gap, these stray but valuable example of creative genius are adequate proof to suggest that the pre-Maurya India had an indigenous tradition of carving out independent figures in metal and clay. Again, the archaeological remains of the royal pillared hall near Pataliputra would reveal that a large number of huge stone pillars were employed to support the wooden roof.³⁰ It is evident that wood was the main medium of construction prior to the introduction of stone during the Maurya period and it was not impossible for the artisans to switch over to the new medium *i.e.*, stone, as and when it was introduced here.

The art of the Maurya period was flowing through two different streams. The one being indigenous and true to the soil, was practised in clay, wood and metals, wherein the native craftsmen probably created beautiful but naive forms of divinity, such as the Earth Goddess,

the Yakshas and Yakshis on one hand and the secular themes, like the terracotta figurines depicting male and female, various animals, birds and foliage on the other. The occurrence of the Hindu gods and semi-divine figures with precise iconographic forms at Bharhut suggest a long-standing tradition. Similarly, the massive but life-like Dhauli-elephant and the clumsy but unconventional modelling of the Rampurva bull, which seems to be based on earlier clay prototypes, do not fall within the conventional main stream of the Maurya court art. They probably represent a different art style and aesthetic vision developed on an earlier indigenous tradition. Ray has rightly remarked, "The art form represented by the Dhauli Elephant and the Rampurva Bull stands on a different footing altogether; it is perhaps the indigenous art tradition practised in wood and clay, probably through centuries, an art tradition to which the art of the Indus valley may have bequeathed but distant and faint memories".³¹ This indigenous art in clay, wood and metals had little in common with the Maurya court art, which drew inspiration from the Achaemenian and West Asian sources. The native craftsmen and artists, who belonged to an agriculture-based rural society, selected their art form, symbols and motifs from the existing environment and thereby fulfilled the basic socio-religious needs and aspirations of the people. Their art represented the traits and traditions, customs and manners, myths and philosophy, the flora and fauna of the land which the artists themselves belonged to.

The extensive Maurya dominions and their friendly ties with the foreign counterparts brought the Indian craftsmen in touch with Iranian, West Asian and Hellenistic establishments in West Asia. Iranian court seems to have impressed the Mauryan artists who borrowed some of their forms and new techniques. The plan of the royal palaces at Pataliputra, including the majestic columns and format of the imperial charters addressed in third person for the general public were probably derived from the living Achaemenian traditions. The Indian artisans, who reared somewhat different native artistic technique, forms and motifs, might have been invited by the Maurya court to assist the foreign craftsmen initially and also to imbibe alien traditions to produce novelties in the realm of Indian

art, which very well suited to the ambitious designs of Asoka to embellish his court with alien pomp and glory. This unique combination of the Achaemenian, Hellenistic and Indian art traditions created something new, monumental and majestic which was, no doubt, based on foreign concept but modified and moulded to fit in the framework of Indian traditions. The Maurya art of the Asokan period thus, presents a synthesis of ideas, trends and technique pertaining to varying art traditions of different lands.

It must, therefore, be admitted that the Asokan art owes its monumentality and grandeur to the personal will of the emperor, Asoka and vast resources of the state. But it lacked the popular support of the people at large. Firstly, there was no active participation of the people in this art as it was beyond their power and reach. Unlike the later Buddhist *stupas* where individual contributions were acceptable, the free standing monolithic and proclamatory character of the Asokan columns neither permitted people's participation in the growth of the monuments nor it anticipated any donatory gifts from the common man. There was, thus, no direct involvement of the people to accept the Maurya art as their own. It was inspired by alien concept and form and at the same time, it had no direct dealing with the public. On the contrary, the pre-Maurya traditional art of India was religion-oriented wherein the common man had a direct involvement. The cult-images fashioned in gold and clay from Lauriya, Piparawa and Bhita confirm this view. Similarly, the *charanachitras* or the portable painted scrolls of the time of the Buddha were used to show the divinity to every common man to fulfil his religious ambition. Secondly, the Asokan columns contained the royal instructions which the people in general were expected to follow in their day to day life. The Edict Nos. Seven and Nine proclaimed the individual faith of the Emperor and thereby directly interfered with the ancient customs and religious practices which had deep roots in the existing society. Asoka who believed in the chastity of the Faith, disallowed the people their deep rooted social customs, such as the observance of the *vratas*, the *samajjas*, which included the religious processions and other festive occasions and the eating of certain birds and animals. etc. He was probably right in exhorting the people to shed off cruelty, superstitions.

and other social evils yet, the people at large reacted sharply to this sudden change in their hereditary traditions. Hence, the Asokan columns were probably treated with contempt and total indifference by the people adhering to the belief other than that of Asoka. Consequently the imperial Faith and art survived during the life time of the Emperor and disappeared soon after his death. This is probably the reason that the Maurya art remains a brilliant but isolated chapter of the history of Indian art.

A circular abacus with the popular honeysuckle and lotus motifs is presently exhibited in the Municipal Museum, Allahabad. The carving in low tone includes two opening buds with pistils above, probably representing a stylized lotus. The seven petals, one rising vertically in the centre and three on either side curling at the tip would form the well-known honey suckle motif. The bead-and-reel moulding at the base reminds us of the same motif in the Sankisa column. This abacus seems to have originally formed part of the Asokan column, presently standing in the Allahabad Fort. It is also possible that the pillar was originally set up at Kaushambi and then shifted to Allahabad at a later date.

A large number of the polished stone discs, popularly known as ring stones, were unearthed at Bhita and Kaushambi and other sites in North India. These discs can be divided into two major groups. The first exhibits a hole in the centre and the sloping sides are carved with four nude female figures, probably the Mother Goddesses in four directions with the dispersing palm tree or honeysuckle motif. In the second category, the central hole is absent and the entire inner surface is either a plain circle set in a depression or a raised knob from which radiate petals to give an idea of the full blown lotus. The West-Asian motifs, like the winged lions, pyramids and the concentric cable mouldings bring them nearer to Maurya art. The workmanship being of a high order, places them in the Mauryan period.

POST-ASOKAN SCULPTURES

A few stray examples from the excavations of Bhita and Kosam provide positive evidence for the continuity of the Maurya art in Bundelkhand region for some time even after the death of Asoka.

Kaushambi was the provincial seat of the Maurya power and Asoka had evinced personal interest in the affairs of its local Buddhist Order. Being an important centre of maritime trade the affluent business community might have extended its generous hand towards the artistic development of the region. These later examples lack the excellence and fine modelling of Maurya court-art yet the Chunar sandstone and the typical Mauryan polish suggest their distant relationship with Maurya school of sculpture. They can be assigned to the post-Asokan era. Some significant post-Asokan sculptures are found from an ancient village Mainhai, situated one and a half miles away from eastern gateway of the ancient city of Kaushambi.³² The three finds: a square capital in the shape of a palm-fan, a broken figure of a horse in round and a bell-shaped capital with abacus on top are carved out of Chunar sandstone and bear the same lustrous Mauryan Polish. Unlike monolithic Asokan columns these sculptures from Mainhai are separate segments of a column. They are inferior in workmanship and exhibit a definite technical variation where separate segments were carved out and assembled together to form a column. The palm-fan-shaped square capital, with four palm leaves extended on four sides and the palm fruits shown behind, is in bold relief. Here the Achaemenian influence is more evident. The Achaemenian capitals are generally crowned with stylized palm-leaf motif which was probably an early Egyptian tradition. Another bell-shaped capital with carved abacus on top also belonged to a column. The abacus presents a circular spigot for fixing the socket of the surmounting figure and is adorned with the low carving of a series of feline animals in playful mood. The animals are carved in a naturalistic manner. The representation of a humped camel suggests West-Asian influence. The raised ribs and twisted rope design motif are derived from the Achaemenian tradition.

The important discovery is that of the figure of a headless and feetless horse carved in round. The coarse modelling is based on the indigenous tradition of clay modelling. It is more naturalistic as compared to the stylised forms of the crowning animals of Asokan columns. Even the necklace worn around the neck of the animal seems to be a native tradition which is also found with the Bharhut

and Amaravati sculptures. The modelling is nearer to the standing elephant of Sankisa column.

A few stone heads with a peculiar headdress representing a fillet, have been recovered from Bhita. These heads alongwith Mathura and Sarnath examples, are a separate 'well-marked stylistic group', which exhibit foreign facial types or the common Hellenistic motifs that had migrated to eastern world. N.R. Ray suggests, "Since Hellenistic contacts were potent and effective even after the fall of the Mauryas, migration, adoption and adaptation of Hellenistic facial and physiognomical types, art-forms and motifs at later periods of history cannot be ruled altogether out of consideration".³³ Another relief from Bhita exhibits definite advancement in carving, wherein a woman is reclining against a man seated by her side.³⁴ The sculptor has scored over earlier rigidity and the figures are endowed with expressiveness. These examples are the missing link between the Maurya and the Sunga art.

SUNGAS

After the downfall of the Maurya empire, the political unity of India suffered a major setback. The dominions of Pushyamitra Sunga, who had usurped the power after dethroning the last Maurya emperor, Brihadratha, extended upto Narmada in South and Sakala in the North, as attested by Taranatha. There was still no strong power to check the foreign aggressors who entered into Gandhara and Western Malwa through the North-western frontiers of India. After the death of Pushyamitra, Madhyadesa was further divided into several smaller principalities which were ruled by the local chieftains of the Sunga house.

The socio-religious conditions in Madhyadesa underwent a major change. The *Dhamma* of Asoka, was losing ground fast and people in general were attracted more towards the popular and emotional aspects of the Buddhism. Meanwhile, the Vaishnavism and Saivism were gaining upper hand with the support of the ruling houses of the Gangetic region. The growing popularity of the Bhagavatas was successfully drawing even the foreigners within its fold. Sanskrit too occupied a prominent position in the North as compared to Prakrit,

which had established itself in Southern India. This sudden change in the outlook and behaviour of the people gave birth to a new art, which drew inspiration from the Indian soil and the Maurya art, which owed its monumentality and majestic strength to an alien influence died its natural death.

It is rather strange that the Maurya art, which was so splendid, magnificent and sophisticated, should have gone out of vogue so quickly and dramatically. Apart from the change in socio-religious climate, what could have been the other factors responsible for the total disappearance of the Maurya art ? First of all, the Maurya art was a court art wherein the common man had no active part to play. The monolithic Asokan columns presented more an intellectual and symbolic approach towards religion which was probably beyond the understanding of common village-folk. There was neither the theme nor language, which the people at large could follow. It is not the philosophy but faith, not the ethics but rituals and the mythology around them which has always attracted the common people. Hence, the Asokan columns failed to stir inner emotions of the ordinary members of the pastoral society which formed a great force for any art or religion to reckon with. In the Indian context art always acted as the language of religion it belonged to. As the language of Maurya art remained unintelligible to the masses, it could not draw the massive support of the people. Secondly, the monumental and majestic qualities of Maurya art required vast resources and backing of a powerful State. The meagre resources and disturbed political conditions probably did not permit such a costly venture by the north Indian States. Just after the decline of the Maurya supremacy, the focus of international trade also seems to have shifted to the southern regions of the country which provided better sea-ports and navigable facilities. The brisk trade of South India with the Roman world had opened new avenues of trade. There was no major force in Madhyadesa right from Pataliputra in the east to Ujjaini in the west, to maintain the monumentality and lavishness of Maurya court-art. The Sunga art, from Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Kaushambi, Bhita and Sanchi postulates altogether a new technique, different forms and fresh approach. Ray rightly

remarks, "Early and mature post-Maurya narrative art is clearly and frankly a negation of all that Maurya court art stood forthe latter is symbolic whereas the former narrative, the latter dignified and aristocratic, the former, relatively simpler and more popular. But the most significant difference between the two lies in their respective language of form".³⁵

The early art of the Sungas was based on native traditions which suited to the socio-religious needs of an agrarian society. It reflects the simple, unsophisticated and indigenous trends, the myths and concepts of popular Buddhism, rituals and superstitions of people in a plain, story-telling technique. The art acts here as a vehicle to carry and communicate the popular mode of Buddhism to the people of all walks of life. Unlike the Maurya court-art, the art of the Sunga period is simple, straight-forward and legible to laymen. The stories of the past and present lives of the Buddha as described in the *Jatakas* are depicted in such a simple, narrative method that the onlookers can understand enjoy and derive inspiration from them. The human figures, their dress, ornaments etc., are drawn from the living groups of people of the region. The background of the sculptured panels are filled with the indigenous plants, flowers, birds and animals. The entire artistic panorama moves as a devotee goes forward, enjoying the panels and identifying himself with the existing atmosphere. The popular beliefs and concepts of a pastoral society, pertaining to Yakshas, Nagas, Tree-spirits, *Gandharvas* and *Vidyadharas* are interwoven into the stories in such a fascinating manner that the people in general must have felt elevated to a higher plane, losing their sordid identity. This unique identification of self with the divine drama probably made the Sunga art alive and brought it nearer to the people. It was this intrinsic and inherent quality of the Sunga art which successfully eliminated the Maurya court-art which, with all its majestic and monumental art-excellence, failed to attract and inspire the common-folk. Whereas the Maurya art appealed to human intellect, the Sunga art stirred emotions and caught imagination of the people. The former was aristocratic and sophisticated, whereas the latter remained simple but more romantic and popular. It is not only the royal personages but the people at large *i.e.*, townsmen, city-guilds. monks, nuns, artisans,

laymen, tradesmen and peasantry who contributed to the artistic growth and popularity of the Bharhut *Stupa*. A large number of donatory records from Bharhut reveal that except the eastern Gateway and the railing which were got constructed by Dhanabhuti and his son Vadha Pala of the royal Sunga house, the other minor gifts of rail posts, coping stones and cross-bars and the carved figurative panels were contributed by ordinary male and female, for the enlargement and beautification of the *Stupa*. Such a gift was considered as an act of great religious merit. It was meant for the people to cherish amongst themselves the popular mode of Buddhism through its varied mythology and rituals. It was a direct outcome of the collective will and efforts of the people that enhanced the prestige and glory of the *Stupa* which was an embodiment of their high religious ideals. There might have existed studios and workshops of artists in Bharhut which supplied images to pious devotees for making such a gift.

The success of the Sunga art may be accounted for its plain language and simple form. The technique, as shown through the carved panels of Bharhut, Bodhgaya, Kaushambi, Bhita and Sanchi is flat carving in low tone. Whereas the Maurya art in three dimensional to be seen from all sides, the early Sunga art is in relief to be viewed from the front only. This technique appears to have been drawn from the cloth-painting tradition of the *pata-chitras* or the *charana-chitras* mentioned in early Buddhist literature. Ray points out, "The portable picture galleries are mentioned as *charana-chitras* which the Buddha highly spoke of and consisted, according to Buddhaghosa, of pictures of happy and unhappy destinies of men after death with appropriate labels attached to them and shown in portable galleries".³⁶ The flat surface of the stone panels, carved in low tone either horizontally or vertically, gave an impression of a painted scroll. Even the top horizontal panels of the gates of the Sanchi *Stupa*, with their rolled up projections at either ends, probably represent the rolled up sides of the *pata-chitras*, ready to be spread out for exhibition.

The early Sunga sculptors had a long standing experience of wood-carving, which is a softer material than the stone. The peeling off the wooden surface and its chiselling did not permit hard strokes. Similarly, the carving of wood with primitive tools probably resulted

in a low and flat surface. Hence the earlier phase of the Sunga plastic art, as reflected through the ground balustrade of *Stupa II* at Sanchi, is carved in low tone and consists of square, rectangular, half-round and round panels. The carving of the railings and gateways of Bharhut stupa, is also very low and flat, representing silhouettes. There is no developed sense of perspective either. No doubt, there seems to be slight awareness of modelling by grading the different planes of figures in distinctive layers. The action is invariably suggested by tilting into the relief on the top surfaces and at the sides. The idea of depth is not yet introduced. Side by side, the sculptor is adept in carving out figures in profile. A large number of railing posts from Bharhut are carved with the life-size portraits of Yakshas and Yakshis in numerous bends and postures. However, there is a considerable amount of rigidity and frontality in these human figures, still there is a noticeable developed sense of modelling and artistic vision which the sculptors of the Sunga period gained gradually by carving out independent human figures. For example, the relief of *Sirima Devata* on the rail post from Bharhut reflects a static rounded breasts. In fact, the artist has successfully overcome the earlier defect of flatness of surface. The round cheeks and breasts of the figure bring it nearer to reality. The narrow waist is an advancement towards the idea of three dimensionism. However, the figure still lacks the swaying effect and dynamic movement as compared to the *Culakoka Devata* relief. The former suffers from heaviness and rigidity of form whereas the latter is full of rhythmic movement and elasticity due to the graceful bends in the body. The sculptor is moving with constant tension to overcome the defects of rigidity of form and frontality. The ultimate success is achieved in an independent figure of *Yakshi* from Didarganj, Patna. The treatment of the life-size *Yakshi* is simply superb in so far as the controlled modelling, exquisite draughtsmanship and rhythmic balance are concerned. It will not be an exaggeration to say that the Didarganj *Yakshi* represents the highest water-mark of the Sunga art, which started its innings at Bharhut.

It will not be out of context here to study the social climate, which gave life and flesh to the early Buddhist art of Bharhut. Bharhut was probably a small township, lying on the road leading from

Pataliputra to Ujjaini. It formed a part of the Sunga dominions. Besides its advantageous geographical position, Bharhut is nowhere mentioned as an important seat of political or cultural supremacy during the Sunga regime. In fact, Kaushambi, which lies about 100 miles to the north of Bharhut, remained a city of great political eminence both before and after the rule of the Sungas. Bharhut must have, therefore, attained religious eminence just after the erection of a Buddhist *Stupa* there. The royal personages, tradesmen, monks, nuns, artists and laymen started visiting Bharhut to fulfil their religious obligations after the erection of the *stupa*. Prior to this event, Bharhut was probably inhabited by a particular tribe. It is this typical tribal character which is reflected in the sculptural art. The Bharhut reliefs depict traits and trends, customs and superstitions, religion and mythology, dress and ornaments, of a pastoral society. Even the flora and fauna referred to in the *Jataka* stories belongs to this region. The male and female figures of the reliefs are the actual models selected from the living society. The artists might have taken note of the feminine beauty to depict the Yakshis and other divine dancing figures such as Sudarsana, Misrakesi and Alambusha, etc.,³⁷ Cunningham has rightly pointed out that the dress and ornaments too are drawn from the Bharhut area and some of them are still in practice.³⁸

The Bharhut sculptor, who drew inspiration from the living models of the pastoral society, has made a very faithful depiction of the typical tribal social customs, manners, dress and ornaments. Unlike the female figures from Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda which represent the sophisticated and urbanised Satavahana-culture, the Bharhut sculptures represent the day to day life of the village folk in their natural habitat. The female figures of Bharhut rail-posts exhibit even the tattoo marks (*godna*), carved on their faces and body, which is still a living tradition. As Cunningham remarks, "Now, it is a curious fact that not only are all the female in the Bharhut sculptures more or less ornamented with tattoo marks, but they are all dressed in the same short *dhoti*-petticoat of the present inhabitants, which reaches down to the knees".³⁹ These ornaments were of silver and gold and studded with precious and semi-precious stones. as are used even today.

The Bharhut sculptors were conscious of the rich and variegated flora and fauna of their region. This innate love of Nature exuberates everywhere through the meticulously carved lotus flowers, stalks, garlands, creepers, plants, birds and animals which dominate the moving panorama of Sunga art. Even the human figures, wherever carved, are shown as a part and parcel of this over-flowing natural phenomenon. N.R. Ray suggests "Look at any coping stone and you will find a huge stout lotus stalk flowing in rhythmical waves from form to form, not only binding each isolated item in one whole but permeating each isolated object itself, including the limbs of human beings, the animals and the trees with the same flowing linear rhythm."⁴⁰ There is a variety in the lotus flowers and plants represented in carved medallions cross-bars and coping stones. In the medallions of cross-bars of the pillars full blown or half-blown lotus flower is carved while the coping stones generally portray the lotus plant consisting of a rhizome, with nodes at regular intervals. Each node gives rise to numerous independent stems laden with leaves, flowers and buds. The upper border of coping stones are generally decked with a different variety of blue lotus (*utpala*), having a 'tall tumbler like' appearance. The lotus plant is sometimes seen issuing from a *purnakumbha* or 'Vase of Plenty' and sometimes it is oozing out of the mouth or navel point of an Yaksha. Probably, the lotus plant here represents the *Kalpavriksha* or *Kalpalata*, which fulfils the worldly desires of human beings. The male figures here may be regarded as the Tree Spirits. It is known from the early Buddhist literature that the Tree Spirits were commonly worshipped during the Sunga period. The idea represented in Bharhut reliefs is an admixture of the Vedic concepts with the popular beliefs of the common folk.

This unique pliable quality has endowed the early art of the Sunga period with enormous amount of flexibility and rhythmic vigour. The meandering creepers with sprouting twigs and stems cover the entire background space of coping stones and pillar medallions. The birds, animals and human beings are entwined to flow continuously in the same stream of life. It is common sap of life which flows through everything and making them thrive and prosper. Not only the plants and creepers are beaming with this eternal energy but

the males and females, with their innumerable bends in the body, are swaying in a linear rhythm. The beautiful maidens, reclining against flowering trees, represent the ancient tradition of *Dohad*, wherein a young lady was required to embrace a tree to bring it to blossom. The two bends (*dvibhanga*) or three bends (*tribhanga*) of the body of female figures like the meandering creepers suggest the common source of energy passing through every living being. The carving is both in low and high relief.

The subject matter of the Bharhut relief invariably centres around the life of the Buddha. It was commonly believed that the full Enlightenment or Buddhahood could be achieved through the righteous deeds and purification of the Self. Buddha himself had been constantly struggling in his previous births towards the fulfilment of this goal. Such innumerable stories of the previous births in the *Jatakas* must have stimulated the people to emulate Buddha's example in their day to day life. Majority of the Bharhut reliefs are the pictorial depiction of such *Jataka* stories in simple and narrative form. Buddha is nowhere depicted in human form. His presence is felt through certain well defined symbols. The scenes are provided with short descriptive labels in tangible Prakrit language. Such short descriptive labels do not figure in the Bodhgaya and Sanchi *stupas*. We may infer that the legends and the symbolic meanings of such panels had become familiar and thus redundant to the people at large by the time the decorative panels of the Bodhgaya and Sanchi *stupas* were carved. The short descriptive labels are again found in the stone carvings of Amaravati *stupa* of Andhra, where the symbols and motifs occurring in the Bharhut *stupa* were yet to be properly understood.

The notable inscribed scenes in the carved panels from Bharhut include Niga, Naga, Yava-Maghakiya, Mugha Pakkha, Latuwa, Chhadanta, Isi-Singiya, Yambramane Avayesi, Kurunga Miga, Hamsa, Kinnara, Asadriva, Dasaratha, Isi Miga, Uda, Sujato Gahuts, Bidala or Kukuta, Magha Deva, Vitura Punakaya, and Bhis Haraniya *Jatakas*, as identified by A. Cunningham.⁴¹ All these legends tend to proclaim the manifold virtues of the Buddha in his previous births. The early *Acharyas* of the Hinayana pantheon probably borrowed them from the existing society and attributed the same to Buddha with

slight modifications here and there. The Bharhut sculptors might have been asked to depict these didactic tales, attributed to Buddha's previous births, on the gateways and railings of the *stupa* so that the devotees could seek inspiration from them and lead a virtuous life.

These narrative scenes are probably the earliest *Jataka* tales woven in the framework of Buddhist mythology, representing the Hinayana philosophy where the Buddha is deemed to be an Enlightened human being, full of humane virtues. The later *Jatakas* depicted at Sanchi, Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda, etc., are probably the later inventions to proclaim the Mahayana concept of the Buddha as great Saviour, who dedicates his life for the total emancipation of human beings. At Bharhut, the purpose of the simple, didactic *Jataka*-tales is to inspire human beings to lead a pure and meaningful life, whereas the later *Jataka* stories at Sanchi and Amaravati etc, present the Buddha as a merciful divine being, who saves the humanity from utter sordid disaster.

Thus, the sculptural art of Bharhut exhibits an early creative impulse in simple language and naive form to educate and enlighten the ordinary village-folk of the popular aspect of Buddhism. The subject matter and art traditions are derived from the indigenous source unlike that of Maurya art which reflects individual taste of Asoka and alien motifs and form. At Bharhut, the sculptor is experimenting on a new medium, the red sandstone of Vindhyan range. Hence, the modelling seems to be inaccurate, draughtsmanship is imperfect and there is hardly any feeling of perspective. The idea of three dimensions has not yet been evolved. Yet the sculptor has immensely succeeded in narrating the *Jataka* stories in simple and lucid manner. The technique of carving is in low bas-relief with considerable frontality, leaving an impressions of the painted surface of the *Patachitras*. The figures of Yakshas and Yakshis present a massive volume and frontality. The supernatural powers of the Yakshas, Yakshis, Vriksha-devatas, Nagas and the *apsaras*, etc., are suggested by their domineering and majestic forms, as compared to the figures of ordinary human beings. The idea of multiple heads and hands to suggest divine power has not yet come into vogue. Although the art of Bharhut is a negation of Maurya art yet the sculptors do

not seem to have forgotten the prevalent art motifs and designs of the preceding era. For instance, the octagonal columns with inverted lotus capitals, the honey-suckle motif, the long thick coat (*udichyavesa*) of certain human figures, the winged animals and the single Kharoshthi letters as mason's marks on little balusters and the bases of pillar statues, still suggest the distant relationship with the Persian, Egyptian and Greek art, which inspired the works of Mauryan period.

Coomaraswamy has rightly pointed it out, "the school of Mathura is more nearly related to Bharhut than to Sanchi, and is represented by some fragmentary sculptures which must go back to the middle of the second century B.C."⁴² Some of the early architectural fragments from Mathura, showing similar running floral scrolls, winged animals, female figures with folkish outlook and jewellery, are derived directly from Bharhut tradition. A certain amount of frontality and stiffness still persists which again shows the continuity of earlier tradition. No doubt, the Mathura sculptors preferred the heaviness of form for the male and an aggressive sensuousness to female figures. Another major difference between the sculptural art of Bharhut and Mathura is that the former gave more prominence to Nature whereas the latter introduces the human figure as the point of central attraction. The Nature plays only a subordinate role in the later sculptural art of India, where the human figure is the pivot of all attraction. The religious themes and bas-relief carvings, the motifs, designs and an ardent love for Nature, *i.e.*, the budding lotusses, meanders, birds and animals are manifest commonly in all the early centres of Indian art.

The early art of Bundelkhand at Bharhut, Bhita and Kaushambi acts as a cradle to nurture the growing traditions, traits and trends of the sculptural art of India. Its radiating rays go a long way to illuminate the later centres of Buddhist art, such as Bodhgaya in the east, Sanchi, Mathura and Pauni (Maharashtra) in Central India, Bhaja, Karle and Pithalkora in the West and Jagayyapeta and Amaravati in Krishna Valley in South. The same subjects in low tone carving technique are found depicted everywhere, with slight regional variations.

There is a gradual change in the technique of the art of stone carving as noticed in the later Buddhist centres which came after Bharhut. For instance, the early architectural fragments and sculptural remains from Bodhgaya, Kaushambi, Sanchi and Mathura exhibit a tendency towards the softening of the outline and relaxed modelling. A few railing posts from Kaushambi in the Allahabad Museum and a railing post containing Yaksha figures from Nagod in Satna District of Madhya Pradesh, presently in the Allahabad Museum, are the best examples. Pramod Chandra observes, "Although the memories of Bharhut survive in the moderately angular contours, the pleats of gathered end of the *dhoti* which project between the legs and the minutely detailed rendering of the turban cloth pattern, the sculptured form begins slowly to waken to life."⁴³ The milieu has changed and shifted from Bharhut to new centres like Bodhgaya, Sanchi, Kaushambi and Mathura, etc. The carvings of fragmentary coping stones from Kaushambi in the Allahabad Museum, which can be dated to 2nd-1st centuries B.C., are nearer to Bodhgaya and Mathura in so far their foliage pattern consisting of single blue lotuses to fill the loops formed by the winding lotus stalk are concerned. The same similarity exists in carving out human figures. The squat human figures, showing full proportions with high waist, broad hips and plain jewellery are found at Bodhgaya.

IST CENTURY A.D. TO 4TH CENTURY A.D.

The history of Bundelkhand, after the downfall of the Sungas, is shrouded in mystery. The North-western frontiers of India were thrown open to foreigners who invaded the country, one after another to establish their hold over the fertile plains of North India. The Indo-Greeks, the Sakas, the Pahlavas and the Kushans had established their partial hold in Central India and took active interest in Indian art and culture. The notable rulers of Indo-Greek dynasty, *i.e.*, Menander and Antialkidas, exhibited their great love for the development of Buddhism and Hinduism. Menander probably accepted Buddhism as his personal faith. The Besnagar Inscription informs that Antialkidas sent his ambassador, Heliodoros to the court of Bhagabhadra, the king of Vidisa in eastern Malwa. Heliodoros, the

Greek ambassador, professed the Bhagavata religion and set up a *Garuda* column in honour of Vasudeva (Krishna), the God of gods. The Kushans appear to have developed a catholic outlook towards the various religions of India. They got the figures of Siva, Skanda and Buddha depicted on their coins. Kanishka, the great Kushan King, became a convert to Buddhism, as is known from his coins as well as the Peshawar Casket inscriptions.⁴⁴ He got constructed the majestic relic tower and Sangharama at Purushapura or Peshawar which was admired even by the later Chinese and Muslim travellers.⁴⁵

This overall participation by the foreigners in Indian art and culture was bound to leave an abiding impact. It paved ground for the exchange of ideas, forms and traditions amongst people of different regions and stocks. Such a blending of divergent norms and traditions led to the wonderful cultural synthesis.

N.R. Ray points out, "Through the centuries a considerable number of aliens had entered the fold of faith, and good number of them, the Hellenistic Greeks, for instance, came from cultures that had a strong anthropomorphic tradition with the worship of images of gods and goddesses as the core of all their religious practices."⁴⁶ It must also have prompted the deification of the Buddha. It was during this period that the anthropomorphic representation of the Master was conceived due to the sudden change brought in by the Mahayanists who sanctioned the anthropomorphic worship of the Lord. Gandhara and Mathura were the two well known centres where an image of the Buddha was conceived simultaneously. The Gandhara sculptor had borrowed the Indian *mudras* and sacred *lanchhanas* of great men and transferred them to the figure of the Greek god, Apollo, to convert it into the figure of the Buddha. The tradition of the Mathura artists was, however, different. They had the figures of Yakshas and Nagas to act as prototypes of the Buddha figure. Hence, the figures of Bodhisattvas and the Buddha at Mathura were carved on the models of earlier Yaksha figures. It is for this simple reason that the early images of the Mathura school represent Buddha as a Mahapurusha having a body with broad shoulders and massive form. The well known *lanchhanas* and *mudras* of hands and legs, etc., help us in identifying the figure. An

early figure of the Buddha found from Kaushambi is dated in the second regnal year of Kanishka, which is equivalent to circa A.D. 80. The characteristic features, i.e., iconography, dress and the countenance would suggest that the figure belongs to Mathura school of art. It must have been carved at Mathura during the last quarter of 1st century A.D. and brought to Kaushambi for installation. A torso of the Buddha figure from Bhita, datable almost to same age, is also housed in the Allahabad Museum. The tall, and massive proportions, broad chest and stout legs are, no doubt, reminiscent of early Yaksha figures. The heavy and schematic drapery, covering the entire body of the Buddha and falling downward through the fist of the left hand, suggests an alien influence. It appears that the Mathura artists, who developed an independent image of the Buddha based on indigenous tradition of form, *asanas* and *mudras*, also sometimes borrowed the alien style of dress which was better suited to depict Bodhisattvas as the royal personages. Mathura was an important centre in North India for the art of stone carving and the Mathura studios were busy in producing majestic Buddha figures in large numbers to meet the growing demand from all corners of the country during the last quarter of first century A.D. Another early image of the Buddha from Sarnath which was carved in the third regnal year of Kanishka, a year later than the aforesaid Kaushambi Buddha, is again a work of Mathura workshops. It is interesting to note that both the figures of Kaushambi and Sarnath were made to order at Mathura for the Buddhist clergy. Inscriptions on the pedestals of the two images mention the names of nuns, Sanghamitra for the former and the monk, Bala, for the latter.

The earlier works of Mathura school did inspire the regional artists of Bundelkhand, both at Bhita and Kaushambi, to carve out some of their early Buddhist sculptures, which have been excavated from the above sites. Early figures of the Buddha-Bodhisattvas, Yaksha and Nagas from Bundelkhand region, bear an unmistakable impact of Mathura school of art yet they exhibit the trends of a new and distinct style of sculpture in its formative stage. Pramod Chandra observes, "A consideration of the style of these works makes it clear

that the Kaushambi artist was not content to merely imitate the products of the Mathura workshops. Instead he endowed his work with fresh feeling, rendering the contours more fluidly, dissolving the sensuous and obtrusive fleshiness of Mathura into a more abstract surface".⁴⁷ Infact, the torso of the Buddha figure from Bhita has all the characteristic features such as the broad chest and heavy trunk of a Mathura Buddha. Still, the modelling here is soft and more disciplined to reduce the weight and heaviness of early Mathura prototypes. A standing figure of a Buddhist monk from Kaushambi, presently in the Allahabad Museum, is possessing the striking similarity with the early specimens of Mathura art belonging to Kushan era in its heaviness of form and crude workmanship. It is thus evident that there existed very close ties amongst artists of the two centres i.e.. Mathura and Kaushambi, where the demand for the Buddha image was constantly increasing. Initially, the Kaushambi artisans borrowed the anthropomorphic form, iconography and the *asanas* and *mudras* and also the earlier concept of the Buddha figure where he was depicted as a Mahapurusha. Hence, the flabiness of form and massive proportions of Mathura school are also visible in the early works of Kaushambi. However, the sculptors of Kaushambi, who had a long history and experience in the art of stone carving right from the Maurya period, introduced gradual changes in the concept as well as the execution of Buddha figure. It is a historical fact that the monks and nuns of Kaushambi region had started revolting against the age-old tenets of the orthodox Theravadins right from the period of Asoka. With the rise of the Mahasanghikas, the Buddha was no more considered as mere human being with extraordinary knowledge. The concept of *Yoga* and *Karuna* were evolved and attributed to the Buddha, the Saviour, who was full of compassion towards all worldly beings, who lived a miserable life. The Buddha, hereafter, struggled not only for the purification and salvation of his own self but for the emancipation of the entire humanity. This unique concept of *Karuna* had a universal appeal and the artists of Bhita, Kaushambi and Sarnath made a fervent bid to bring in the feelings of love and compassion on Buddha's countenance. Similarly, the flabiness of form with striking frontality of the Mathura school of Kushan era did not find favour

with the later artisans of eastern Bundelkhand region. The figures of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas from Kaushambi and Sarnath exhibit linear features with perfect modelling and accurate chiselling of the plastic surface. A Buddha head from Bhita, datable to the fifth century A.D., is presently housed in the Allahabad Museum. It bears a close resemblance to the Sarnath Buddha heads with serene countenance, drooping eyes and sensuous lips to express the feeling of universal love and compassion. Another notable image of the Buddha, seated in a *abhayamudra*, was found from the village of Mankuwar near Allahabad. This unique Buddha figure, presently in the State Museum, Lucknow, was installed by a monk, Buddhmitra in the Gupta era 129 (A.D., 448-49), as per an inscription engraved on its pedestal.⁴⁸ The figure, no doubt, shows Mathurasque features, such as the round face, broad chest and heaviness of form. However, there exists a marked difference in the idea and execution. Here the broad shoulders and swollen chest above the narrow waist suggest the holding of breath by a yogin. It is the concentration of mental energy which makes the chest expand over the tapering body. Here the Buddha is represented as a *Yogin* in deep trance. The shaven head covered with a tight fitting scarf hints at the legend that the Buddha removed his hair before leaving the princely state. The linear arrangement of the light drapery, which is supposedly made of pure silk, clings to the body. Incidentally, the light drapery here is nearer to that of the Sarnath sculptures, which further hints at the declining influence of the Mathura school over the Bundelkhand region. The face is beaming with a radiant glow arising from inner experience. An oval face with half closed eyes fixed at the tip of the nose, elongate ears and the sensuous lips bespeak of the pristine glory and artistic excellence of the Bundelkhand artist. In the words of Pramod Chandra, "The process is also later seen at work in the fifth century A.D., when the Mathura style was again transformed, as in the fine Buddha head from Bhita and the famous seated Buddha from Mankuwar near Allahabad, both of which represent an intermediate stage between the robust and vigorous work of Mathura and the luminous and graceful manner of late fifth century work of Sarnath."⁴⁹

It need not, therefore, be over emphasised that the gifted artists of Bundelkhand had heralded a new era in the style of the sculptural art of India, which attained its ultimate perfection at Sarnath. It is worthwhile to point it out that the well known Sarnath school had its beginning in eastern Bundelkhand region and style so developed was not confined to Sarnath alone. Born and brought up at the river bed of Yamuna, this far-reaching style had travelled northward upto Sarnath and its southwardly reverberations had reached the Vindhyan range, where Ekamukha Siva *linga* in typical Sarnath idiom, was found from the village of Khoh in Satana district of Madhya Pradesh.

BRAHMANICAL SCULPTURES : (5th to 7th century A.D.)

The three succeeding centuries after the beginning of the Christian era witnessed a great socio-religious change in Madhyadesa. Numerous earlier centres of the Buddhist activity, *i.e.*, Bharhut, Kaushambi, Bhita and Sanchi had made a tremendous increase in the popularity of Buddhism amongst the lower sections of the society. Yet, the mighty kings and their feudatories still exhibited their religious fervour by performing costly Vedic-sacrifices.⁵⁰ The Vedic religion was, however, on its decrease. It was gradually yielding place to a modified religious system, the so-called Neo-Brahmanical faith, which prescribed image-worship of Hindu gods and goddesses such as Vishnu, Siva and Durga in their manifold forms. The Bhakti cult was being professed through the *Bhagawat Gita*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The concept of *Vyuhās* and *Vibhavas* of Visnu were being evolved and codified. The sacred *Agamas*, *Puranas* and *Sastras*, which paved a way for the present Hinduism, had started appearing on the scene to strengthen and improvise fresh guidelines to Brahmanical society. The great exponent of Buddhism and Brahmanism were deeply involved in a country wide philosophical debate to establish one's superiority over the other.

In realms of art and architecture, Mathura had emerged as the most prolific centre to produce a large number of Buddhist as well as the Brahmanical images to be installed in different religious shrines throughout the country. It is, thus, evident that the Mathura school of art was first to set norms and provide earlier prototypes of the

Buddhist divinity and Brahmanical gods and goddesses to other well known regional centres, such as Kaushambi, Bhita, Sanchi, Besnagar, Tumain and Airekina in eastern Malwa and Bundelkhand.

It has already been stated that the artists of Bundelkhand possessed an earlier tradition of stone carving, right from the times of Asoka. This traditional style of carving in relief seems to have continued at Kaushambi even after the dawn of Christian era. A magnificent sculpture from Kaushambi, showing Siva and Parvati in standing pose is presently in the Indian Museum, Calcutta. It can be ascribed to second century A.D. It is an excellent specimen with exquisite workmanship to exhibit ancient technique of stone carving in bold relief. The elegant pose, eternal poise, soft carving and linear rhythm offer a clue to the distinct and luminous style of Sarnath which was still in its formative stage. A certain amount of stiffness and frontality is visible which is an outcome of earlier experience of carving technique practised at Bharhut. The sculpture further suggests that the artists had not yet developed the technique of separating the figure from the original rock. An inscription on the pedestal records that the sculptured panel was dedicated in the one hundred and thirty sixth regnal year of Maharaja Sri Bhima Varman, the Magha king of Kaushambi. On the other hand, a few early and inscribed images of the Buddha, belonging to the Mathura School, have been discovered from Kaushambi, Bhita and Sarnath which prove an intimate relationship that existed between the artists of Mathura and Kaushambi. The sculptors of Kaushambi and Bhita borrowed freely not only iconographic traits but also the style which prescribed heaviness of form and voluminous proportions to figures of Hindu gods and goddesses. However, the modelling here is somewhat terse and the figures lack the dynamism and suggestiveness of the Gupta era. The *Chaturmukha Siva linga* from Kaushambi, now exhibited in the Allahabad Museum, shows pronounced Mathurasque features of early Kushan era. A standing figure of Vishnu from Bhita, presently kept in the Allahabad Museum, is endowed with all the inherent qualities of Mathura sculpture; such as the square chest, broad shoulders and massiveness of form. The figure is datable to 4th century A.D. However, the

round face, jewelled headgear and the squat body deviate from the set modelling of Mathura style. It draws inspiration from Bodhgaya and extends support to the formation of a distinct style of eastern Malwa, as seen at Vidisa, Udayagiri and Eran. The standing Vishnu carved in cave No. 6 at Udayagiri ascribable to the period of Chandragupta II, is very much similar in style and form to the figure of Vishnu from Bhita. The two lower hands of the god hold the *gada* and *chakra* in natural form, whereas the two upper arms hold a fruit and conch. The *chakra* in both the figures is placed on a pedestal with the lower left hand placed over it. Of course, the head-gear and *vanamala* of Vishnu from Udaigiri are somewhat longer as compared to those of the Vishnu figure from Bhita. In another figure of Vishnu from the Udaigiri, the attributes, viz., Gadadevi and Chakrapurusha are carved in personified form. Another early Gupta figure of Vishnu from Eran, Sagar District, appears to be somewhat later. Here, the circular halo and the facial features exhibit advancement in style. There is a marked change in the modelling and execution. The earlier heaviness of the form is gradually decreasing and the chest is expanded with an eternal poise, a characteristic of the Gupta sculpture. The aforesaid two figures are still not totally free from the rigid postures and massiveness of form and they introduce a trend deviating from the style of the Kushan sculptures of Mathura. The broad shoulders, tight contours and the swelling chest of the Bhita Vishnu figure bring it nearer to the art of Udayagiri and Eran. It is the development of a new style where the sculptor is struggling to shed off frontality and produce three dimensional effect in art. The heavy and schematic drapery of the Mathura sculptures is now becoming thinner and somewhat transparent. A close scrutiny of the sculptures from Bhita, Eran and Udayagiri further suggest that the sculptural art of Bundelkhand and eastern Malwa was passing through a transitional period. The overwhelming impact of Mathura school was declining and the artists of Madhyadesa were undergoing a novel experience filled with regional aspirations and creative fervour.

The Varah incarnation of Vishnu at Udaigiri, with all its masculine and majestic beauty, heralds a new era in the sculp-

tural art of Bundelkhand. The large and powerful figure of Varah reflects the strength and power of the Gupta empire. Although the huge volume and proportions of the figure exhibit Mathura-sque tradition yet the dynamism and perfect symmetry in form bespeak of the controlled modelling, mastery of execution and the increased greatness of art. The huge and colossal figures of the Jain Tirthankaras of the Kushana period from Mathura nowhere betray such a quality of workmanship and charm.

It will not be out of context to examine the new socio-economic changes that were becoming evident with the advent of Gupta era in Madhyadesa. The complete and extensive victories of Samudragupta brought the northern India into one political unit and offered a stable social and economic base for an artistic and cultural effulgence. The continuous peaceful conditions and prosperity of the region under the scrupulous rule of the mighty Guptas, such as Samudragupta, Chandragupta, Kumaragupta and even Skandagupta, created very congenial atmosphere for the development of fine arts (*lalit kala*) i.e., architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dance and literature. The sophisticated and highly enlightened rulers of the Gupta and Vakataka houses adorned their courts with gifted personages in realms of art and literature and extended a very warm and generous patronage to the cultural growth of the country.

Thus the sculptural art of Bundelkhand in Gupta period reflects fully developed taste, sophistication and a rich legacy of a highly cultured society. The folkish outlook and pastoral character of the Sunga art of Bharhut had undergone a total change. The favourable economic conditions with flourishing trade, both in and outside the country, had transformed the rural population into a highly cultured and cultivated society. The 'Beauty' was defined and fashionable norms for the *nagarikas* or *abhijatyas* were set by renowned poets, like Kalidas. The large drooping eyes, developed breasts, narrow waist and round hips had come to be recognised as marks of feminine beauty. The costumes were prepared out of finely woven, thin silk which allowed the charm of flesh to be viewed from outside. The Chinese silk was imported and used by the affluent class of nobility. The glittering gold and precious gems

like pearls, rubies and diamonds were freely used for the beautiful jewellery worn by the males and females. All such traits and norms of the new social order are depicted in the sculptural art of the Guptas.

A large number of magnificent Hindu shrines, with exquisite sculptural decor, had come up throughout the region. Archaeological and inscriptional remains from Bhita, Kaushambi, Gadhawa, Deoriya, Mankunwar, Bhumara, Deogarh, Eran, Nachna and Tewar suggest that Bundelkhand was a centre of great religious and artistic activity during the Gupta period. The other well known centres, such as Khoh, Tumain, Vidisa and Udayagiri were slightly outside the geographical boundaries of Bundelkhand. The same rock-cutting technique and the similar themes based on Pauranic mythology are pursued everywhere. As the kings of the Gupta dynasty were *Parambhagavatas*, the cult of Vishnu seems to have enjoyed major support from them. Of course, the Saivism, Buddhism and even Jainism were also flourishing side by side.

The eastern monuments of the Guptas stood along the Satna-Jabalpur line, which was an ancient route of the Chedi country. The beautiful Siva temples at Sankargarh, Bhumara and Khoh in erstwhile Nagod State, the two Parvati and Siva temples at Nachna-Kuthara in earlier Ajaygarh State, a Gupta temple at Kari-Talai and another at Tigowa in Madhya Pradesh were constructed during this period. Further upward, the Bhita and Gadhwa have also brought to light the beautiful remains of Gupta temples. At the western end, the fertile valleys of the Betwa, Sindhu and Chambal were marked with beautiful Gupta monuments. The more famous of them are situated at Deogarh, Vidisa, Udayagiri and Eran.

The Pauranic mythology had gained an upper hand. The so-called, 'Neo-Brahmanism' was struggling hard to undo the influence of Buddhism from Madhyadesa and establish its superiority. Hence, the exponents of Neo-Brahmanism conceived of new symbolism, which could compete with Mahayanist's popular theory of Bodhisattvahood. Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara was the great saviour and so was Vishnu in the form of Varaha and Krishna. Vishnu incarnates as Varaha and rescues the Earth Goddess. Krishna protects people

from the wrath of Indra by lifting the mountain Govardhana. This new symbolism adopted by the Neo-Brahmanical faith proved very effective to draw the masses within its fold. An eternal assurance from Krishna in the *Gita*, "As and when the religious order decline, I incarnate Myself to establish virtue and to protect the virtuous ones", must have granted unconditional protection and attracted large following of people to the *Bhagawat* cult. This heroic trend in the philosophy of the *Bhagawatas*, who were constantly engaged in fighting out the final metaphysical battle with the Buddhists, must have inspired the artists to carve out huge, voluminous figures of Varaha-incarnation, Krishna lifting mountain, Govardhana, the fierce aspects of Siva, Durga and Mahesamurti at Udayagiri, Varanasi, Bhumara, Ellora and Elephanta, etc.

It has already been stated that the sculptural art of Bundelkhand was moving with two distinct styles of stone-carving; the one based on earlier tradition of bas-relief character of Bharhut and the other being inspired by the Mathura school. During the 'Classical Age' of the Gupta rule, the former was practised to depict the narrative scenes of the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* whereas the latter played a major part in carving out independent and built-in images of the Hindu divinity in the caves as well as structural shrines. The talented artists of Bundelkhand deviated from Mathura style and developed a style of their own which ultimately reached its climax at Sarnath. No doubt, the western regions of Malwa and Bundelkhand had greater impact of Mathura, which is clearly exhibited at Udayagiri with the image of Varaha, having huge volume and proportions. Here the modelling is tense and workmanship is still developing whereas the 'Nara-Narayana' panel of Deogarh temple of slightly later date suggests an improved quality of modelling and inner experience, which is nearer to Sarnath. On the contrary, the mythological scenes from the *Ramayana* carved in low tone on the *jagati* of the Deogarh temple exhibit altogether a different technique of carving based on earlier tradition of Bharhut.

The soft, linear modelling and suppleness of the Bhita, Kaushambi, Bhumara, Gadhawa, Nachna and Khoh examples are based on a different idiom as compared to the slow and restricted

line, terse modelling and heaviness of form of the sculptures of the Udayagiri caves, Gwalior and Eran. The rock-cut sculptures of Udayagiri, Vidisa and Eran, as they are hewn of live rock, maintain heaviness, roundness of form and coarse workmanship. The elongate figures remain undetached from the carved surface. The inner spiritual experience and luminosity of the Sarnath idiom is absent here. No doubt, a few figures from the Gwalior region, such as the Ganga from Besnagar and the Apsara in the Gwalior Museum, do exhibit the quiet poise, soft modelling and rhythmic balance but they may be explained as the common denominator of Gupta art on the one hand and the developed quality of the local style on the other.

The sculptural art of Bhumara (Allahabad Museum) and Nachna, (Indian Museum, Calcutta), both in Panna District of Madhya Pradesh, exhibit the fully developed and distinct version of the style of the Gupta period. The precise and assured carving of the stone to produce elaborate foliage and exuberant ornamental details, speak of the high technical skill and the maturity of the Gupta sculptors. The exquisitely chiselled lotus rhizome, undulating upwards with vibrating energy, are provided with frothlike foliage and the multiple planes of carving present a lively effect of light and shade. The naked Yakshas and *ganas*, interwoven amidst undulating meanders, suggest the common sap of life flowing through all living beings. Nowhere this continuous flow of line, flawless carving and elegance of design of the Bhumara Sculptures seem to have been surpassed in Indian art. The graceful features, striking contours of the body with two or three bends (*dvibhanga* or *tribhanga*) and diaphanous drapery bring them nearer to Sarnath idiom. A few richly carved horizontal panels from Gadhwa, now in the State Museum, Lucknow exhibit more developed aesthetic vision by way of controlled modelling, subtlety of form and delicate plastic treatment. The figures carved in relief are endowed with considerable ease and spontaneity. The subtle and flowing forms in multiple poses suggest not only the pliable quality but also the rhythmic balance and dynamism. The panel showing fight between Bhima and Jarasandha in the State Museum, Lucknow, is remarkable for its harmonious treatment and faithful depiction. The pliable quality, graceful charm and subtle execution are

the outcome of regional characteristics and experience of the Gupta artists. The gadhwa sculptures along with the Mankuwar Buddha would possibly establish a close relationship of the sculptural art of eastern Bundelkhand region with that of Sarnath. A hoard of beautiful sculptures, excavated from Kaushambi and presently kept in the Allahabad University Museum, further represent the growth of a distinctive and transformed style of the sculptural art of Bundelkhand. The luminosity and graceful charming features of the Sarnath school of sculptures are, to a large extent, present in the famous *Ekamukha Siva linga* from Khoh in the erstwhile Nagod State, near Satna. The eternal quest for knowledge and elevated inner spiritual experience, which form the basis of Sarnath group of sculptures, are prominently manifest on the solemn face of *Eka-mukh Siva linga*, wherein the serenity and spiritual wisdom are brought out through the soft, bow-like eyebrows and the petal-shaped eyes, half-closed in meditation and gazing towards the tip of the nose. The vertical third eye is placed on the forehead. The parting lips, pointed chin and grooved neck go very well to balance the upraised curly locks, tied at the middle which was a characteristic quality of the Kaushambi Art. The *Ekamukha Siva linga* from Khoh probably presents the high water-mark in the sculptural art of Bundelkhand.

The later sculptures of the region lack the earlier luminosity and melting grace of the Sarnath style. The sculptures of the Dasavatara temple of Deogarh, which stands on the bank of the river Betwa in Lalitpur District, correspond to the typical Gupta style of 6th century A.D. The richly ornamented doorway, beautifully carved panels on the exterior walls and a row of carved mythological panels on the terraced basement of the temple exhibit spirited draughtsmanship, graceful forms and exquisite workmanship. The epic scenes from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are vividly portrayed. However, the aesthetic experience and the modelling of figures, although following the same Gupta idiom, are inferior to those of the Sarnath group of sculptures. At Deogarh, the figures are still short and heavy, the modelling is somewhat tense and the treatment is coarse as compared to the growing forms, fluid mode-

ling and the soft and luminous treatment of the Sarnath style. Yet the sculptural decor of the Dasavatara temple at Deogarh manifests all the inherent regional characteristics, *i.e.*, sturdiness, masculinism and divine grace. If the Gajamoksha panel suggests heaviness and restricted line, the Seshasayi and Nara Narayana panels represent the spontaneity of growth, subtlety of form and the spiritual ecstasy.

Another great quality of the Deogarh sculptors, probably an innovation in the technique, is carving of the rock in different planes to provide depth and extra vision which act as landscapic backround for the carved out scenes of the sculptures. For example, the carved background space of the Nara Narayana panel and so also in the panel depicting the 'Redemption of Ahilya' present the pastoral setting to narrate the scenes very successfully. The sculptor is very carefully and intelligently communicating the idea of a saintly resort in a forest. The carved out narrative panels from Deogarh and Gadhwa in horizontal or vertical compartments, sometimes divided by small pillasters in between, exhibit the continuity of Sunga idiom of narrating the historical and mythological episodes. The scenes from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have been chosen and carved in a sunken space with a raised border to catch the eye of the beholder.

The sculptor took the liberty, wherever it was possible, to depict secular themes, like the processions, music and dance, drinking parties and the general human behaviour reflecting love, anger, pathos, sorrows and joys of the life. If the Varah from Udaigiri suggests the valour and prowess, the Mankunwar Buddha exhibits eternal peace and knowledge. The duel between Jarasandha and Bhima from Gadhwa manifests the feelings of anger, whereas the *mithunas* from Deogarh are suggestive of earthly desires and passion. The artisans of Bundelkhand did not fail in making minute observations of the all pervading Nature. The floral scrolls, flowing creepers, sprouting buds and the curling leaves amidst birds, animals and human figures in the carved stone panels from Bhumara, Gadhwa, Deogarh and Nachana suggest the universality of nature; the common juice of life flowing through all living beings.

The sculptural art of Bundelkhand, after the middle of sixth

century, A.D. adopts a new trend which is endowed with fresh norms and characteristics. The modelling becomes relaxed, spreading without much meaning and the forms gain more lateral expansion with less and less spiritual experience. The roundness of form, linear rhythm and soft plastic treatment of figures are still maintained, reminding of the earlier Gupta-traditions. The sculptor is gradually becoming more conscious of the charms of flesh, angularity and striking bodily contours. He is unable to hold the earlier suggestivity, spiritual elegance and inner aesthetic experience. The art is tending more towards mannerism and stylistic excellence rather than to catch inner sentiments. A large number of temples of early Pratihara period in Rajasthan and Western Malwa and those of the Kalachuris in Central India conform to this new style of sculptures. A beautiful example of this new trend can be seen in the figure of Kubera from Pabhosa, which is presently exhibited in the State Museum, Lucknow. The god, seated in *Paryanka mudra* has sharp angular features with the traditional decor of the Gupta period. The lotus *prabha*, incised at the back of the head, is again reminiscent of the Gupta tradition.

TERRACOTTA

The terracotta art, being mainly the poor man's delight, has been popular in Bundelkhand since remote period. It continues even today in the villages of the region, although it is now confined only to making of toys for children and a few religious figurines for the worship of the village women folk. The terracotta art has preserved till today the earliest traditions of India so far the religious, social and artistic norms are concerned. The terracotta figurines of the ancient days are the most valuable and authentic records to know the culture *i.e.*, religious practices, dress and ornaments and so also the traits and traditions of the people of the past. The terracotta art is equally helpful in understanding the origin of limitless forms, motifs and designs of the art of later periods of Indian history. The inscribed terracotta seals from Bhita, Kaushambi and other sites provide wealth of information for Indian history.

The small primitive-type clay figurines from Bhita and Kaushambi suggest that the terracotta art had a long standing tradition

in the Bundelkhand region. All such archaic type terracotta figurines found in the region need not necessarily belong to the pre-historic period. According to P.L. Gupta, the historicity of terracotta art of the Gangetic Valley should be ascribed to 3rd century B.C., and later.⁵¹ The basis for his contention is that most of the objects of the clay art were found not as a result of any systematic excavations. Thus, the absence of archaeological evidence is a serious handicap in the precise dating of these figurines. So far the scientifically excavated sites and their finds are concerned the earliest stratum of several sites, such as Ahichhatra,⁵² Kaushambi⁵³ and Hastinapur⁵⁴ which have yielded the clay figurines, is dated between 300 and 200 B.C. As Gupta believes, the history of clay figurines in the Gangetic Valley can hardly be taken to a period earlier than 300 B.C.⁵⁵

The objects have been excavated from Bhita, Kaushambi, Gadhwa, Eran and Tripuri. It is from Bhita and Kaushambi that the maximum number of figurines, plaques and seals have been unearthed. The black cotton soil on the banks of the rivers, Ganga and Yamuna, provided the best raw material to develop this art. Secondly, the early Brahmanical shrines, where the religious figurines might have been offered, fell on the banks of the two aforesaid rivers. Lastly, the inland river ports at Kaushambi and Bhita had developed a brisk trade in the past and the terracotta seals, which were also used as passport for the movement of goods, were required in large quantity. Hence, the social, religious and economic factors were largely responsible for the development of terracotta art in the region.

TECHNIQUE

The various methods for preparing the clay to produce the cult images are mentioned in early Sanskrit literature. The treatise, *Silparatna*, prescribes the method of preparing the clay for fashioning the terracotta *lingas*⁵⁶. It is mentioned that the good clay fit for the use should be procured and well ground; then it should be left over for a month in *Panchagavya*, consisting of milk, curd, clarified butter, cow-urine and cow-dung. Later, the figures should be burnt in fire. There are several other methods also which are found

mentioned in other Sanskrit texts to fashion clay images. It will be worthwhile to chemically analyse the specimens found from various sites and then know about the actual ingredients and techniques prevailing in various parts of the country.

MANUFACTURING DEVICES

The clay figurines were made either by hand or in moulds or by a combination of both the techniques. The so-called archaic terracotta figurines from Bhita and Kaushambi were modelled by hand. At Bhita the archaic clay figurines are shaped like fishstar, flattened on back and front with four points making the ends of the arms and the legs whereas the top with rounded outlines forms the head. The face is pinched up so that nose ridge is formed. The average height of these figurines is 1 to 1½ inches. They are devoid of any sex marks. Similar few figurines, though somewhat longish, were found from Kaushambi. The notable feature of such figures at Kaushambi is the applique incised eyes. Sometimes, a flat torque is applied at the neck. They are either with a marked chin or without chin.

Certain clay figures show that the bust or the body is modelled by hand but the face is turned out of the mould. The paucity of such terracotta figures from Bhita and Kaushambi suggest that this technique did not find much favour with the artisans. The technique appears to have been common at Mathura where the moulding technique appears to have been developed earlier.

A new and more effective technique of the moulded terracotta plaques, where thematic scenes could be depicted, was favoured at Bhita and Kaushambi. This narrative style of highlighting the political episodes and the mythological stories on the moulded terracotta plaques was in keeping with the earlier bas-relief technique of Bharhut and Sanchi. It is here that the artisans of Bundelkhand exhibited their perfect skill and ingenuity. The minutely worked out moulds, when pressed on the wet clay, produced narrative reliefs with exquisite details on the front side of the plaques which were later put on to fire. It was a great departure from the *primitive technique* of hand modelling. These plaques are either circular or rectangular in form,

the latter being much more common. This new technique appears to have been evolved sometime during the 2nd-1st centuries B.C. and it continued right upto the Gupta period.

Apart from the moulded terracotta plaque, the moulded terracotta figurines are also found in abundance from the various excavated sites in India. The method of making moulded terracotta figurines involved an easy and quick process. Here the clay was pressed into the mould which produced on the clay the impression of the figure. In case, the artist desired the figure to be made in round, the double-mould technique was adopted. The production from the double mould is by pressing two moulds on a solid core of clay and then removing the surplus clay with the help of a knife which would leave the mark of cutting along the entire joint. The other method was to press the clay into two different moulds for the front and the back separately. A margin of clay is left around their joining edge. When the casts are separated from the moulds, the two halves are joined together laterally by wetting the edge and pinching it together. In the case of animal figures, it is moulded in two halves frontally and joined along the ridge of the nose.

Next came the finishing of the details of a figure. In order to produce deeper red colour or rich black shine, a thin slip of clay was applied before the object was baked. Sometimes red or black colours were also applied to the fired surface of the same colour. After the finishing is over, the clay object was put in the glowing fire kept in an earthen vessel. The object was covered with husk. In the figures, which were made hollow either by the process of double moulds or by free modelling, a hole was provided for the removal of hot expanding gases.

Occasionally, the terracotta figurines were painted to bring the desired effect. John Marshall had discovered the painted clay figurines of Gupta period from Bhita.⁵⁷ The coating of colours was given with the help of a brush. As suggested by V.S. Agrawala, the hirmachi and geru were used for the red paint.⁵⁸ Ramraj was used for light yellow and manahsila for bright yellow. The black was invariably obtained from the lamp black. However, the number of painted terracotta figures is quite small. The painted terracottas must have been prepared for the nobility.

TREATMENT

The terracotta art drew its strength mainly from the native traits and traditions, myth and philosophy and so also the social and religious norms of the country. Unlike the temple architecture and sculpture, it enjoyed a considerable freedom as it did not move within the strict canonical injunctions. The artisans chose the themes, forms, motifs and designs for their art, which were not only well known but also well understood by the people from every walk of life. The men and women, their dress and ornaments, amusements and pastimes, sectarian gods and goddesses, animals, birds and vegetation—every subject-matter is drawn from the contemporary life. As the raw material, the clay, was available in plenty and remained inexpensive, the finished items of art fell within the reach of every house-holder. Hence, the terracotta art was meant for common man, it drew its inspiration from the common background and it fulfilled common ideals and aspirations of the people.

The art reached its zenith during the Gupta rule. The narrative method of describing the historical episodes and mythological stories of the Sunga-age has got mixed up with the subtle treatment and general refinement of the Gupta art traditions and the moulded terracotta plaques, thus produced, bespeak of the masterly craftsmanship, ingenuity and the creative genius of the Gupta artists. S.C. Kala rightly puts it, "The sculptures of the Gupta period are marked by a rare quiescent beauty and elegance. The bodies of the figures are supple and an unusual sweetness pervades their faces. The lips are full and the fingers tender⁶⁹."

SUBJECT-MATTER

The themes and subject-matter depicted therein are varied and versatile. The Gupta artists drew immense pleasure in delineating the physical charms of feminine beauty. A large number of female figures in various poses, holding diverse attributes and engrossed in various activities have been unearthed from the region. For instance the motifs, viz., lady with a lotus, a lady holding a fan, woman doing toilet, woman with attendant and woman and a child are found represented in the terracotta of the Gupta period. The Mithunas

or Dampati remained a favourite theme with the Sunga and Gupta artisans of Bundelkhand. A large number of such terracottas are found from Bhita and Kaushambi. The scenes of public amusements, such as the music, dancing, swinging and hunting etc. are also found from Kaushambi. A terracotta plaque from Kaushambi depicts a lady dancing. A male figure is playing on flute. A boy at the ground is playing another musical instrument.⁶⁰ A female playing drums is also found from Kaushambi.

The artisans from Bundelkhand did not hesitate in depicting in their art the human behaviour in day to day public life. A large number of terracotta plaques showing men and women drinking wine together are found from Kaushambi. In one of such plaques, the man is shown holding a cup and the woman a wine jar in her upraised hands.⁶¹ Several terracotta plaques from Kaushambi only depict the drunken ladies being supported by their male counterparts.⁶² The drinking appears to have been very common at Kaushambi during the Gupta period. Similarly, the scenes of erotic nature are also depicted in some of the Kaushambi terracottas. It need not be over emphasised that such terracottas portray the social life of the rich nobility. It is likely that the artists prepared such stuff based on the demands of particular customers. These specimens are datable from 1st century B.C. to 1st century A.D.

Then there are well known historic episodes from the life of Udayana, the romantic king of Kaushambi, which are found depicted in some of the terracotta plaques from Kaushambi only. For example, the story of the abduction of Vasavadatta by Udayana is found depicted in numerous terracotta plaques in a very romantic way. One such plaque is preserved in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, wherein the three riders are shown seated on a running elephant. The queen Vasavadatta holds the goad in her right hand whereas Udayana is carrying his famous flute which attracted the elephants. The third person at the back is the court jester, Vasantaka, who is throwing money on the ground. The foot soldiers of Mahasena's army, were sent to capture Udayana, are busy in picking up the thrown coins from the ground. This tactful device enabled Udayana to enter the boundaries of his kingdom. Another interesting episode, which is

often found depicted in the terracotta plaques from Kaushambi, relates to the story of infuriated elephant of Udayana, which according to traditions was kept chained. On one occasion, the mad elephant pulled out its post and ran amuck on the streets of Kaushambi, creating panic amongst people. The king, Udayana, again tamed the elephant with the soothing music of his flute.⁶³

A few terracotta plaques discovered from Bhita and Kaushambi illustrate some of the well-known episodes from the great Epics, viz., *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The abduction of Sita by Ravana is a popular theme which has been noticed in several terracotta plaques from Kaushambi. One of such plaques, published by S.C. Kala, shows a devilish figure, with sunken cheeks and grinning teeth, seizing a woman in his arms.⁶⁴ Both the hands of the lady are raised upward suggesting her struggle to free herself. The loose garments and falling ornaments of the female figure are indicative of the fact that she is applying full force to set herself free from the clutches of the kidnapper. The male figure is actually shown here as a giant (asura) by his gruesome look and wrinkled face, such as the bulging out eyes, big nostrils and huge proportion of the body as compared to that of Sita. His royal status is suggested by the diadem of rosettes. He wears armlets, wristlet and ear-pendants. The female figure, Sita, wears a sari held up at the waist by a beaded girdle and anklets.

The scholars have forwarded divergent views on the identification of the scene. The scholars like Kala believe that the theme represents some unknown ancient story. However, they do not accept it as a theme from the *Ramayana* simply because they presume that the *Ramayana* scenes in Indian art do not occur prior to the Gupta age. This logic is, far from convincing. The date of the *Ramayana* is definitely earlier than 1st century B.C. As the clay figurines of India are the earliest manifestations of Indian beliefs and traditions, it is quite likely that the artists of Kaushambi preferred to depict the theme from the *Ramayana* in view of highlighting the moral aspect of the story. Another scholar, Sengupta has compared this plaque with the description given in the *Ramayana* and it goes very well.⁶⁵ Kala also states, "the only point which

lends some weight to his (Sengupta's) view is the presence of ornaments on the ground."⁶⁶ The plaque is datable to 2nd-1st centuries B.C.

Another interesting terracotta medallion from Bhita, datable to same period, was acquired by Marshall.⁶⁷ S.C. Kala, P.L. Gupta and others have identified it as the opening scene of the *Shakuntalam*. However, the date of the terracotta medallion is earlier than the date of Kalidas, the author of the *Shakuntalam*. Hence, the identification is not convincing. Sen Gupta has again identified the theme with the abduction of Sita by Ravana from Panchavati, as narrated in the verses of the *Ramayana*⁶⁸.

It is evident that the terracotta art has been prevalent in Bundelkhand since remote antiquity. A large number of archaic figures found from Bhita and Kaushambi suggest the continuity of the prehistoric tradition, even if the actual specimens may not belong to that period. During the Sunga age, the artisans switched over to the new technique of moulded terracottas, which could meet the growing demand for such art-objects. In the Bundelkhand region, the artisans of the Sunga age started carving in stone to illustrate the early Buddhist mythology. The narrative method of bas-relief carving at Bharhut and Sanchi appears to have greatly influenced that potter's art. The moulded terracotta plaques from Bhita and Kaushambi exhibit the same technique. It may also be pointed out here that the terracotta art, although practised in an inexpensive material, was not confined to village-folk only. The literary references, belonging to 6th and 7th centuries A.D., clearly mention that the terracotta figures were arranged even in the royal palaces to be seen and enjoyed by the royal personages. The variety of themes, motifs and designs, as found reflected in the terracotta art, would probably suggest that the potter's art was held in high esteem.

EARLY ROCK PAINTINGS

All over the region of Bundelkhand, there are hundreds of rock shelters which contain innumerable archaic paintings on the rear walls and ceilings. Of late, Indian and foreign scholars have

evinced keen interest on the subject and brought to light a large number and variety of themes painted inside the dingy atmosphere of such early rock-shelters scattered over the Vindhyan range of mountains. The paintings are invariably done with the mineral colours which are found locally and the treatment of paintings is very naive and primitive. The discovery of the stone-age tools and implements inside some of the rock-shelters and their adjoining areas leave no doubt that they were once inhabited by the early settlers who led a savage life and used these rock-shelters for protection from the rains and wild animals. The scholars have put forth divergent views about the dates and authors of these paintings. It must, however, be admitted that much work still remains to be done to come to any final conclusion. Probably, the joint and systematic archaeological, anthropological and sociological surveys in the region could yield better results and provide more information about the purpose, date and author of these paintings in Bundelkhand region.

A large number of such cave paintings have been found in Banda District of Uttar Pradesh and the Bhopal and Sagar Districts of Madhya Pradesh. Besides, the hilly tracts around the valleys of rivers Chambal, Narmada and Son have also yielded numerous other sites with such paintings which would suggest that the people who practised this art inhabited the vast areas right from the Mirzapur District in north, the Hoshangabad District in south and the Chambal valley in the North-west. A series of excavations conducted in the rock-shelters have brought to light a quantity of microliths which prompted scholars to date these paintings to the Mesolithic period. As it has been recorded, "As a result of these excavations, then, the association of the early rock-shelter paintings with the Mesolithic is a reasonable hypothesis".⁹⁹ These excavations, however, do not provide any positive evidence to establish that the paintings in the rock-shelters were painted during the Mesolithic period only. The question of period of these paintings will be discussed later at an appropriate place. Presently, it would suffice to say that the hilly tracts around the river valleys in Bundelkhand were once inhabited by some unknown people with a tribal character who enjoyed painting the rock-shelters in a very primitive style which

is otherwise unknown in the region. The purpose and motivation behind such paintings are not yet known.

Not less than nine such painted rock-shelters have been reported from the Banda District of Uttar Pradesh. Apart from Banda, the other well-known sites recorded by the scholars are Markadi, Manzavan, Serhat, Malwa, Alma-Uldan, Bargarha, Karpatia and Chitrakoot.⁷⁰ All the places mentioned above are situated on South-easterly direction from the town of Banda, all along the Allahabad-Jabalpur railway line. The other neighbouring centres where such painted rock-shelters have been discovered are lying in the Baghelkhand region.⁷¹ Besides, more than a dozen sites are reported from Bhopal, Bhimbetka and Raisen in the bordering areas of Bundelkhand.⁷² In the Sagar District of Madhya Pradesh, there are a number of rock-shelters which contain such paintings. For example, the places like Abchand and Naryawala are well-known for their distinctive style of rock paintings.⁷³ Similarly, a large number of painted rock-shelters have been discovered in the Gwalior and Shivpuri Districts and so also in the Chambal valley of Madhya Pradesh.⁷⁴ In brief, the painted rock-shelters are found all along the Vindhyan range passing through the regions of Bundelkhand.

TECHNIQUE

The technique of early rock paintings is very simple. The smooth, rocky surface of the sandstone did not call for any special effort on the part of the painter to prepare the ground. Unlike the Ajanta paintings, where the mixed coatings were provided on the rock to prepare the surface, the early cave-painters applied their colours straight on the rock to produce the desired results. Similarly, their tools and material were also indigenous and prepared locally. The brush was made out of the bamboo or palmetto twigs, beaten at one end to expose the fibres. When dried, the fibres became quite stiff to hold the pigment and apply it on the surface. Sometimes the finger was also used to draw bold outline. In one instance at the Kabra Pahad, near Raigarh, the powder of the pigment appears to have been blown or sprayed onto a wet surface.

The pigments used by the artists were obtained from the various minerals found locally. The white was made out of *kaolin* or lime stone. The black or deep purple was obtained from magnesium oxides. It is predominantly used at Pachmari in the Mahadeo hills. The bright green, generally used at Bhimbetka, near Bhopal, was extracted from the copper compounds. However, the majority of the colours, *i.e.*, red, yellow, orange or brown were obtained from hematite or other iron oxides available in surface deposits near the rock shelters. The raw minerals were ground to powder which was then mixed with water to be applied on the surface.

SUBJECT—MATTER

A large variety of themes have been painted on the walls and ceilings. The hunting scenes are predominantly common. The paintings depicting group hunting of birds and animals are abundantly found. The hunting figures are armed with bows and arrows, spears, lances and sticks. The dogs were used for hunting. Amongst the animals, the Indian bison, buffaloes, bull, horse, antelope, deer, elephants, rhinoceros and wild boar appear most frequently. The smaller animals, such as the porcupine, hare, squirrel, tortoise, lizard, frog and Jackal, *etc.*, are also common. The fighting scenes are also commonly found. The variety of swords, shields daggers and battle-axes, which are known to have been introduced during the historic period, are also noticed with some paintings. Some of the scenes depicting social life, such as the group dancing, playing of musical instruments and taming of animals, *etc.*, also appear. The carriages drawn by the bullocks are found. The dancing has been a common social custom with all the people since remote antiquity. It reflects the human joy and sentiments. This is probably the reason that the dancing scenes occur in these cave paintings. Besides, the numerous ancient symbols, such as the *swastika*, the circle and the wheel are also found depicted as decorative devices. A great variety of geometric patterns, such as the lines, zigzags, chevrons, triangles, lattices,

lozenges, honeycombing, squares and rectangles are drawn with red or red and white outlines.

THE PAINTERS

It has already been stated that the researches so far made in this direction are hardly adequate to provide any definite evidence about the people who painted these rock shelters and so also the purpose for which they were painted. With the present score of our knowledge, it is somewhat difficult to assign these rock paintings any specific period or date. However, the material excavated from some of the rock shelters, epigraphic data and other sociological traits suggest that the paintings in the Bundelkhand region belong to a wide range of time. The tradition seems to have continued for several thousand years, right from the Mesolithic period to early mediaeval era of Indian history.⁷⁵

V.S. Wakankar believes that the painters of these rock shelters belonged to some unknown nomadic tribal stock who went on moving from place to place in search of food and lived an isolated life. They had little in common with the rest of the people who lived an organised social life in villages and towns. They loved fighting, hunting, dancing, and some of these tribal customs are depicted in these paintings. "And so we conclude that the artists were among the ancestors of some of the present day tribal people of Central India who sustained a shelter painting tradition for several thousand years, until the increasing pressures of more advanced cultures forced them to abandon their rock shelters and forget their painting, or transfer a greatly altered reminiscence of it to other surfaces and materials".⁷⁶

True that these paintings are found on the rear walls and ceilings of rock shelters yet the themes and the subject matter reveal that the authors of these paintings were not totally unaware of the cultural advances of their times. It will, thus, be erroneous to presume that the painters of the rock shelters were aboriginals living a savage and secluded life. In fact, their dress consisting of *dhoti* with flying sash and variety of swords, shields and daggers in addition to spears and lances are suggestive of their developed cultural stage. The curved swords, having guarded hilts are the developed

weapons which were used during the early mediaeval era. Similarly, the trappings and stirrups occurring with the horses painted on the rocks would prove that they were fully acquainted with the developed social and cultural norms of their times. The refined musical instrument like *veena*, *mridangam* or *dholok* hanging from the neck and trumpet, etc., have been used throughout in society. The variety of bullockcarts and the use of a parasol to protect the owner of the cart from the Sun and rain, etc., are the signs of an advanced culture. It is, therefore, incorrect to treat the painters as aboriginal tribes, living in the rock shelters and leading a secluded life. Some of the painted rock shelters of Mirzapur have not yielded the stone age tools at all.

Thus, the identity of the people who painted these early rock shelters is still shrouded in mystery. What was the motive behind painting the distant rock shelters hidden amidst dense forests? Are these paintings associated with the religious rites of the village folk? It is again surprising that not a single figure of any sectarian god or goddess has so far been found in these paintings. The symbols and motifs used to fill up the space in the paintings show considerable affinity with the symbols and motifs painted on early Indian pottery and punch marked coins. What could be the reason for this close and unmistakable similarity? Did the painters of early rock shelters and early Indian pottery belong to a common stock of people who used simultaneously the indigenous symbols, motifs and designs for their art? These are some of the hypothetical questions which need be solved with the help of further researches.

The total absense of the representation of gods and goddesses in these early rock paintings is a serious problem. All other artistic manifestations of early Indian society are invariably associated with one or the other religious sects. The only exception to this common rule is the Megalithic culture of the Indian sub-continent wherein the figures of the sectarian gods and goddesses are not represented. It is a coincidence that the remains of the Megalithic culture are widespread in the regions of Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, where the bulk of the rock paintings and engravings have been discovered. Both the people belonging to Megalithic culture and the painters of early rock shelters in India

are associated with the hill tracts and the forest regions. The horse seems to have been excavated from the Megaliths in different parts of the country.⁷⁷ It is only a hypothesis to attribute the paintings of rock shelter to the builders of the Megalithic culture in India. Future researches may enable the scholars to come to a final conclusion.

PERIOD

The dating of the paintings of the rock shelters is again a subject of wild controversy. Such paintings are invariably on the walls and ceilings of rock shelters in hilly regions which have also yielded the prehistoric stone tools, certain scholars tend to place them in the early stone age cultures of India.⁷⁸ On the contrary, the subject matter and other social and cultural traits depicted in some of the paintings have led some scholars to fix the later phase of these paintings as late as tenth century A.D.⁷⁹ B.B. Lal says, "The paintings occurring in the rock shelters of India have in the past been a matter of great controversy in so far as their chronological horizon was concerned. To some they were so old as the Palaeolithic paintings of Western Europe, while to others they were not of a single period, in fact, in certain cases as many as six strata can be made out. A systematic study of these paintings is, therefore, a great desideration and the same, one is glad to note, is underway."⁸⁰ However, it is almost certain that the tradition of rock shelter painting in India continued for a long span of time, covering several thousands years of the history of human development. The tradition still continues in modified form in Bundelkhand, as the woman even today paint the walls of their houses with indigenous colours and almost similar motifs and designs are painted on walls during auspicious occasions, like Naga Panchami and Hala Sastami, *etc.*

Back to the problem of dating the rock shelter paintings, John Cockburn considered them to be of tenth century A.D.⁸¹ M.E. Gordon believes that these paintings, from the first series to the last, belong to a period of roughly fifteen hundred years ending in 10th-11th centuries A.D.⁸² However, Panchanan Mitra contradicted the views of the foreign scholars and established that the rock paintings of the Vindhyan hills and Banda belong to the Azilian period of Indian Stone Age.⁸³

Radha Kant Varma in his thesis, "Stone Age cultures and Rock Paintings of Mirzapur District" (1965) has associated these paintings with the people who used microliths as their implements.

V.S. Wakankar, the pioneer in the field, has surveyed a large area of the painted rock shelters and noticed twenty styles of paintings. He has also provided the tentative dating, tracing the beginning of the tradition right from the Mesolithic age, if not earlier, and its continuity till the recent times.⁸⁴ The sequence of styles and their tentative dates are based on the various factors, *i.e.*, superimposition of paintings of later style over the earlier, the excavations of various rock shelters the parallels drawn between the styles, symbols and motifs of the rock shelter paintings and early Chalcolithic pottery, inscriptional evidence and other historical data. Although, the results and conclusions thus drawn are tentative without claiming absolute certainty yet this classification of styles is probably best of the so far attempted methods.

According to the above classification, the paintings in some of the rock shelters at Adamgarh (Hoshangabad Distt.), Modi (Chambal Valley), Abchand (Sagar District) and Sanchi, where only the figures of animals are drawn with reddish, brown or black wash, are considered to be the earliest belonging to the Mesolithic periods.⁸⁵ J. Gupta is of the opinion that there is every possibility of getting some of the earliest animal paintings from Mirzapur region also.⁸⁶ It must be made clear again that the relative dating of the paintings is still based on inferences and conclusions derived from a critical study of the available data, which is hardly adequate to reach to the core of finality. As the majority of the painted rock shelters have yielded microliths, both through the explorations and excavations, and the edges of the weapons painted in earlier styles look like microliths, it has been conjectured that the painting in the rock shelters might have started during the Mesolithic period. However, it can not be denied that the microliths in certain parts of India have continued fairly late till the historic period. Again the paintings, showing weapons identifiable with microlethic tools, are superimposed by the paintings of later date. Hence the scholars are inclined to believe that the

beginning of the tradition of painting the rock shelters probably started during the Mesolithic age.

If we accept the above analogy we can say that the earliest centres of rock paintings in Central India were existing around the valleys of the rivers Chambal, Betwa and Narmada. The tradition travelled further to North-easterly direction in the Bundelkhand region. The painted rock shelters of Banda District and those of Baghelkhand region are comparatively of later age. The peaked head-dresses and other costumes and so also the weapons used in these paintings exhibit an unmistakable alien influence pertaining to the dawn of the Christian era, with a margin of two or three centuries on either side. This is further corroborated by the inscriptional evidence found in some of the rock shelters in Chambal Valley.

Although the available evidence is somewhat sketchy to arrive at an absolute dating yet the classification of styles and their tentative dating by Wakankar appear to be quite convincing. The further researches would probably throw more light on the subject.

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1. *CII*, IV, pt. I, No. 42, p. 242.
2. *Op. cit.*, Cunningham, A., 1962, pl. XVI-A.
3. *Ibid.*, pl. XXVIII, fig. 3.
4. *Ibid.*, pl. XIII, fig. 3.
5. Krishna Deva, *Temples of North India*, 1969, p. 6.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *EI*, XXIV, 1937-38, p. 247.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 253.
10. *Ibid.*, XXIII, 1935-36, p. 247.
11. *Ibid.*, XVIII, 1925-26, p. 159.
12. The Gujjarra (Datia dist.) and Rupanath (Jabalpur dist.) edicts were issued by Asoka where he was on tour with an idea to propagate Dhamma.
13. Owing to miniature size of some of the pillars, Cunningham was attracted to believe that there existed a second railing of smaller dimension just outside the great Railing (*Stupa of Bharhut*, p. 12). However, Majumdar (*Guide to the sculptures in the Indian Museum*, pt. I, p. 2) and Mitra, D. (*Buddhist Monu-*

ments, p. 93), do not subscribe to the view of Cunningham. According to them, the smaller posts and coping probably formed part of a balustrade around the processional path.

14. *EI*, XXVIII, 1949-50, pp. 36-41.
15. *Op. cit.*, Krishna Deva, 1969, p. 9.
16. The solitary remain of a Sunga Hindu temple is found at Besnagar, adjacent to the Heliodorus pillar. However, the form of the shrine is not clear.
17. *EI*, XVIII, 1925-26, p. 158.
18. *Op. cit.*, Soundara Rajan, K.V., 1981, p. 13.
19. *The classical Age*, p. 499.
20. Mukherji, P.C., "Report on the Antiquities in the District of Lalitpur", 1899.
21. Brown, Percy, *Indian Architecture*, 1949, p. 50.
22. Ray, N.R., *Maurya and Post-Maurya Art*, 1973, p. 20.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
24. *ASI*, AR; 1912-13, p. 73, ff.
25. Chanda, R.P., "The Beginnings of Art in Eastern India", *MASI*, No. 30, p. 12.
26. *Op. cit.*, Ray, N.R., 1973, p. 26.
27. *Op. cit.*, Chanda, R.P., pp. 3-6, 31-63.
28. *ASI*, AR; 1906-7, p. 122, ff.
29. *Ibid.*, 1911-12, p. 4.
30. *Ibid.*, 1912-13, p. 73, ff.
31. *Op. cit.*, Ray, N.R., 1973, p. 34.
32. Although the Maurya polish is evident in these sculptures yet, they seem to be of much later date. The bell-shaped capitals and other alien motifs must have continued to be practised in art as stray examples here and there even one or two centuries after the Maurya age.
33. *Op. cit.*, Ray, N.R., 1973, p. 42.
34. Coomaraswamy, A.K., *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, 1927, p. 20, fig. 13.
35. *Op. cit.*, Ray, N.R., 1973, p. 62.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
37. *Op. cit.*, Cunningham, A., 1962, p. 29, pl. XV.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-39.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
40. *Op. cit.*, Ray, N.R., 1973, p. 66.
41. *Op. cit.*, Cunningham, A., 1962, pp. 48-82.
42. *Op. cit.*, Coomaraswamy, A.K., 1927, p. 56.
43. *Op. cit.*, Pramod Chandra, 1970, p. 20.
44. *The Age of Imperial Unity*, pp. 146-47.
45. *PHAI*, p. 475, fn. 2.
46. *Op. cit.*, Ray, N.R., 1973, p. 12.

47. *Op. cit.*, Pramod Chandra, 1970, p. 21.
48. *CII*, III, No. 11, p. 45.
49. *Op. cit.*, Pramod Chandra, 1970, p. 21.
50. Allahabad Municipal Museum Yupa Inscription refers to the performance of Sapta Soma sacrifices, such as Agnishtoma, Atyagnishtoma, Ukthya, Shodasin, Vajpeya, Atiratra and Aptoryama, *EI*, XXIX, 1937-38, p. 247.
51. Gupta, P.L., *Gangetic Valley Terracotta Art*, 1972, p. 3.
52. Agrawala, V.S., "Terracotta Figurines from Ahichhatra". *AI*, No. 4, p. 107.
53. *AI*, Nos. 10 & 11, p. 6.
54. *ASI*, AR; 1915-16, p. 14.
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58. *JISOA*, XI, p. 11.
59. Kala, S.C., *Terracottas in the Allahabad Museum*, 1980, p. 6.
60. Kala, S.C., *Terracotta Figurines from Kausambi*, 1950., p. 38.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
62. *JUPHS*, XXI, p. 133.
63. *Op. cit.*, Kala, S.C., 1950, p. 41.
64. *Op. cit.*, Kala, S.C., 1980, p. 57, fig. 145.
65. *JAHS*, XXXII, 1971-72, p. 127.
66. *Op. cit.*, Kala, S.C., 1980, p. 57.
67. *ASI*, AR; 1911-12, p. 40.
68. *JAHS*, p. 130, pl. II (a).
69. Wakankar, V.S. & Robert, R.R. Brooks, *Stone Age Painting in India*, 1976, p. 29.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
71. In the year 1907, the description of rock-paintings of Banda district at Serhat, Malwa, Kuria Kunda, Karpatia, Ameva Uldan and Bargadh were published by C.A. Silberarrrd in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, New Series, 3 (1907), pp. 567-700.
Even earlier to this date, 'The cave Drawings in the Kaimur Range' were published by John Cockburn in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1899 wherein he refers to such paintings near Pabhosa and Chitrakoot.
72. The rock paintings of the Bhopal region and so also the rock paintings of Chambal region were brought to light by Vishnu S. Wakankar, the noted Scholar in this field.
73. About twelve painted rock shelters in the Sagar district were discovered during 1959-60 by the Archaeology Department of the Sagar University in Madhya Pradesh. Much of the new discoveries have been made by Prof. K.D. Bajpai and Dr. S.K. Pande.

74. The credit of discovering a large number of rock-paintings in this region goes to V.S. Wakankar, who has also noticed several inscriptions of 300 to 100 B.C. in early Brahmi character.
75. *Op. cit.*, Wakankar, V.S. & Robert, R.R. Brooks, 1976, pp. 102-103.
76. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
77. It is again interesting to note that the excavations conducted in several painted rock shelters at Bhimbetka, about 20 miles south of Bhopal, have yielded human skeltons and several human burials along with black and red earthen vessels, See, *Stone Age Painting in India*, pp. 105-6.
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Index

A

Agamas, The, 157
 Agrawala, V.S., 68, 269
 Aiyangar, Krishnaswami, 43
 Allan, J., 36
 Altekar, A.S., 32-33, 37, 44, 81
Anguttara Nikaya, 15
 Aryans, The, 20
 Asoka E, 25-26, 32, 58-60, 81, 85-87,
 122, 128, 130, 136, 139-142, 150, 158

B

Bajpai, K.D., 19, 30, 32, 37, 42, 45-45
 Banerjea, J.N., 100
Bhagavadgita, The, 99-100, 109-110, 157,
 162
 Bhandarkar, D.R., 15, 26, 36-37, 46
 Brown, Percy, 134
 Buhler, 26

C

Chakravarti, N.P., 37
 Chandragupta II K, 73, 82, 128, 131,
 159-160
 Chandra, Moti, 37
 Chandra, Pramod, 154, 156
Charita, Harsha, 51
 Chandhary, H.C. Ray, 11, 26, 28,
 43-44

Cockburn, John, 6, 176
 Codrington, K. de B., 1
 Cunningham, A., 16, 18, 32, 69, 147

D

Digha Nikaya, 13
 Dubreuil, J., 49

F

Fa-Hien, 72
 Febvre, Lucien, 11
 Fleet, J.F., 37

G

Ghosh, A., 37-38
 Gordon, M.E., 179
 Gupta, J., 180
 Gupta, P. L., 45, 173

H

Harshavardhana K, 79
 Hunas, The, 83

J

Jatakas, The, 144, 149-150
Jataka stories, 147, 149-150
Jataka tales, 87, 150

Jayaswal, K.P., 37
Joshi, R.V., 8

K

Kala, S.C., 170, 172-173
Kamasutra, 63
Khatri, A.P., 9
Krishnadeva, 37
Kuttanimatam, 71

L

Lal, B.B., 179
Logan, A.C., 6

M

Mahabharata, The, 21, 80, 101, 106,
109, 134, 157, 162, 164-165, 172
Mahabhasya, The, 29
Mahaparinibbana Suttanta, 13
Majumdar, N.G., 37
Majumdar, R.C., 44, 47
Malavikagnimitram, 27-28, 88
Marshall, John, 36
Marshall, J.H., 31, 173
Mirashi, V.V., 37, 42-43, 50
Mookerji, R.K., 2, 29, 31

P

Prinsep, James, 80
Puranas, The, 26, 31, 35, 100, 106, 175
Purana, The *Markandeya*, 104
Purana, The *Vishnu*, 47
Purana, The *Yuga*, 29
Puri, K.N., 7

R

Rajan, Soundara, 129
Ramayana, The, 101, 106, 109-110, 134,
157, 162, 164-165, 172-173
Ratnavali, 79
Ray, N.R., 135, 138, 142-143, 145,
148, 153

S

Sahni, Daya Ram, 37
Samhita, The *Gargi*, 29
Samudragupta K, 73, 128, 160
Sastras, 157
Shakuntalam, 173
Sharma, G.R., 34
Shastri, Ajay Mitra, 37-38, 42
Sircar, D.C., 29, 37, 39-40
Siva Prasad, Babu, 14

T

Trivedi, H.V., 45
Tsang, Hiuen, 72

V

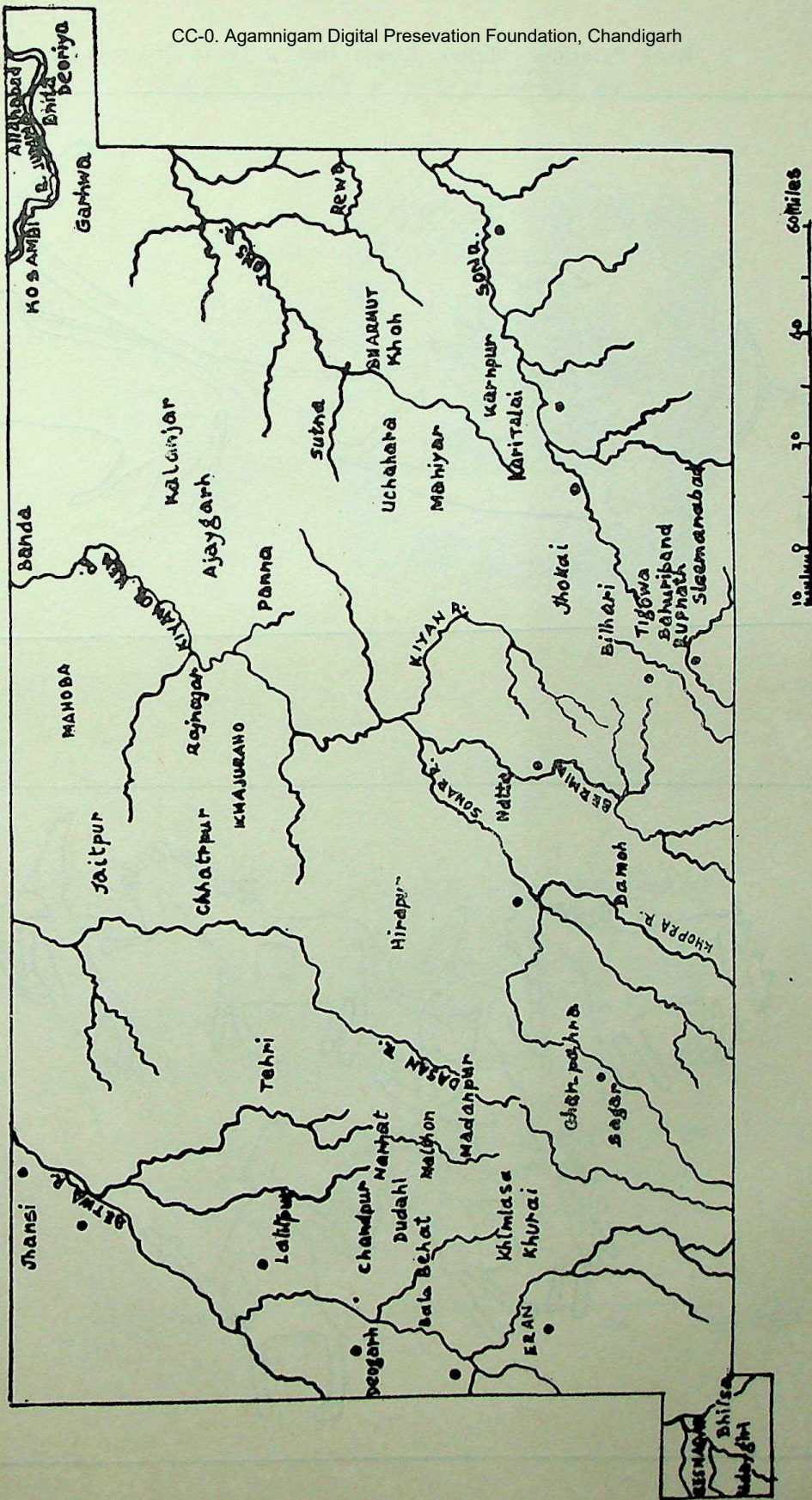
Vavaghosha K, 81
Vinaya Texts, 79
Viracharita, 14

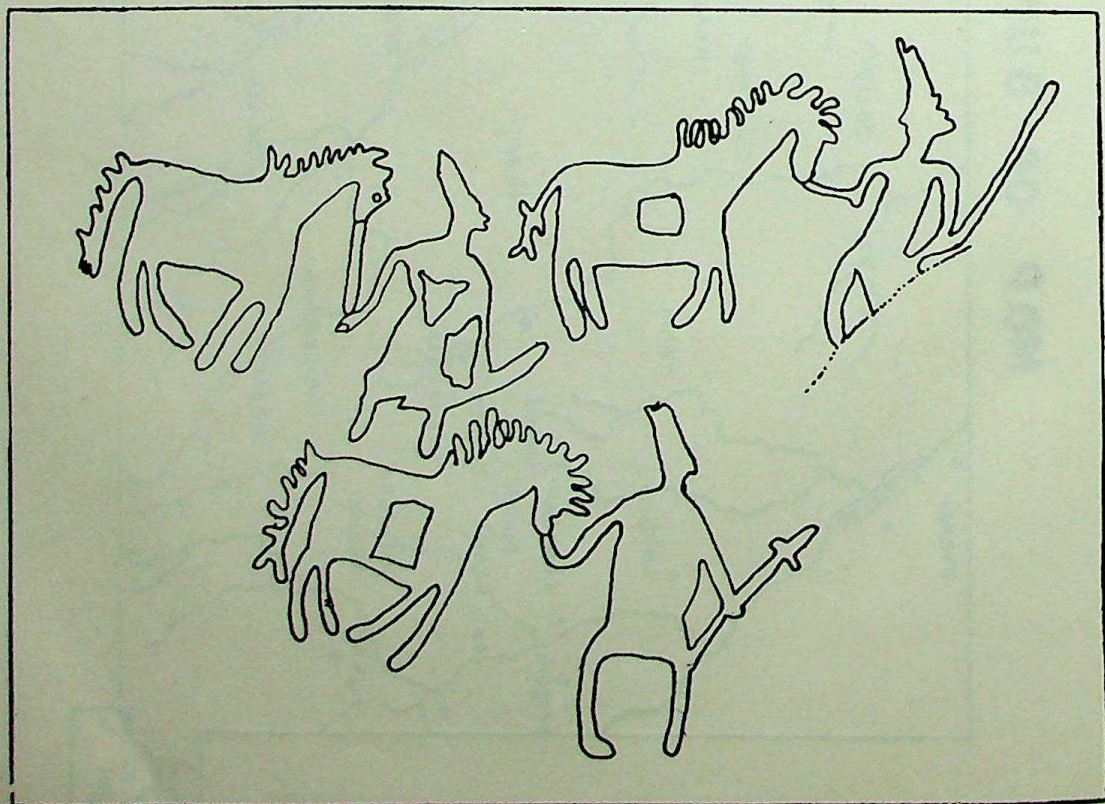
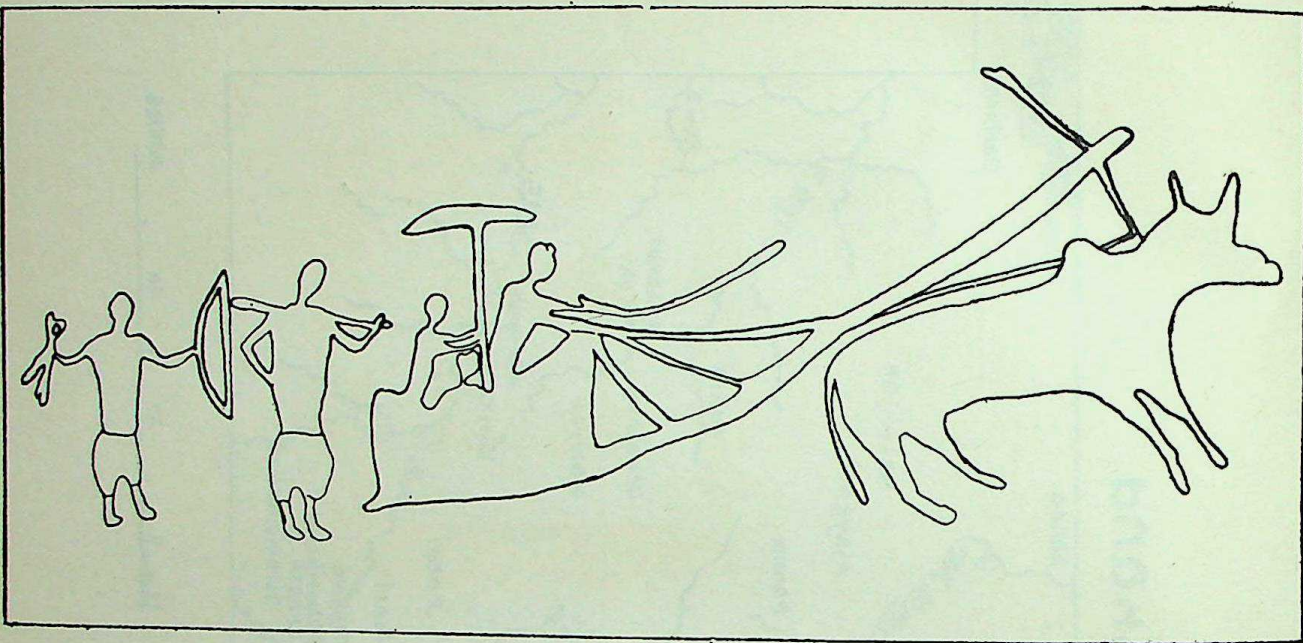
W

Wakankar, V.S., 177, 180-181
Wheeler, Mortimer, 10

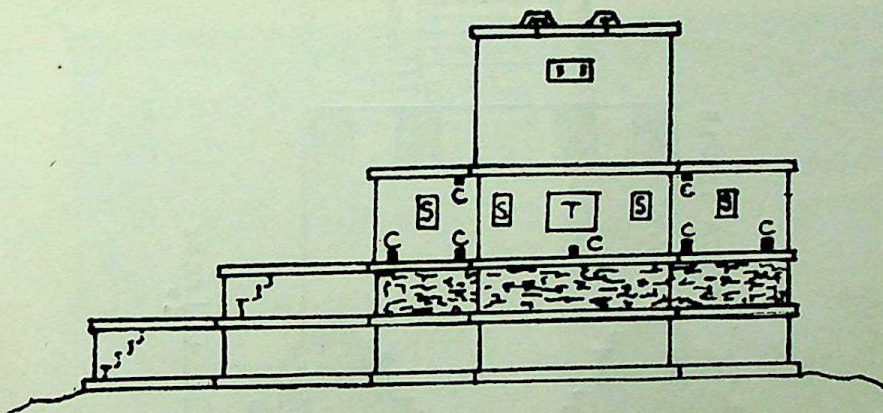
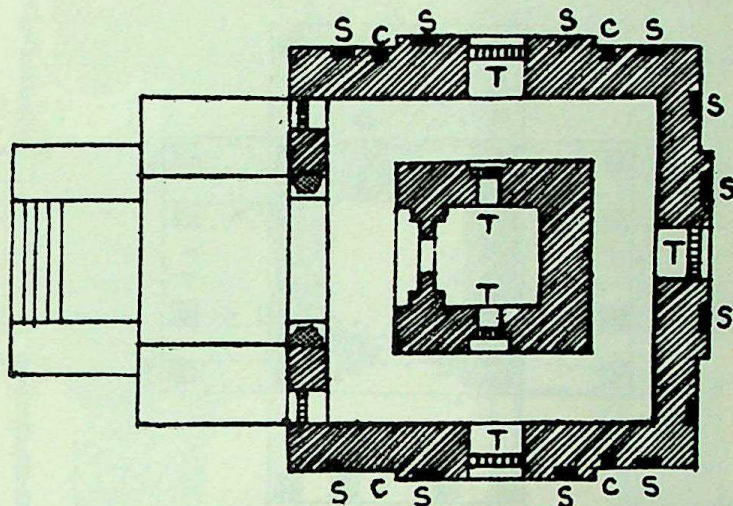
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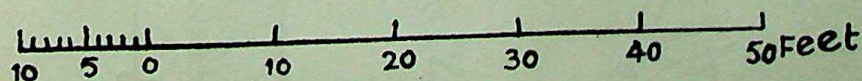




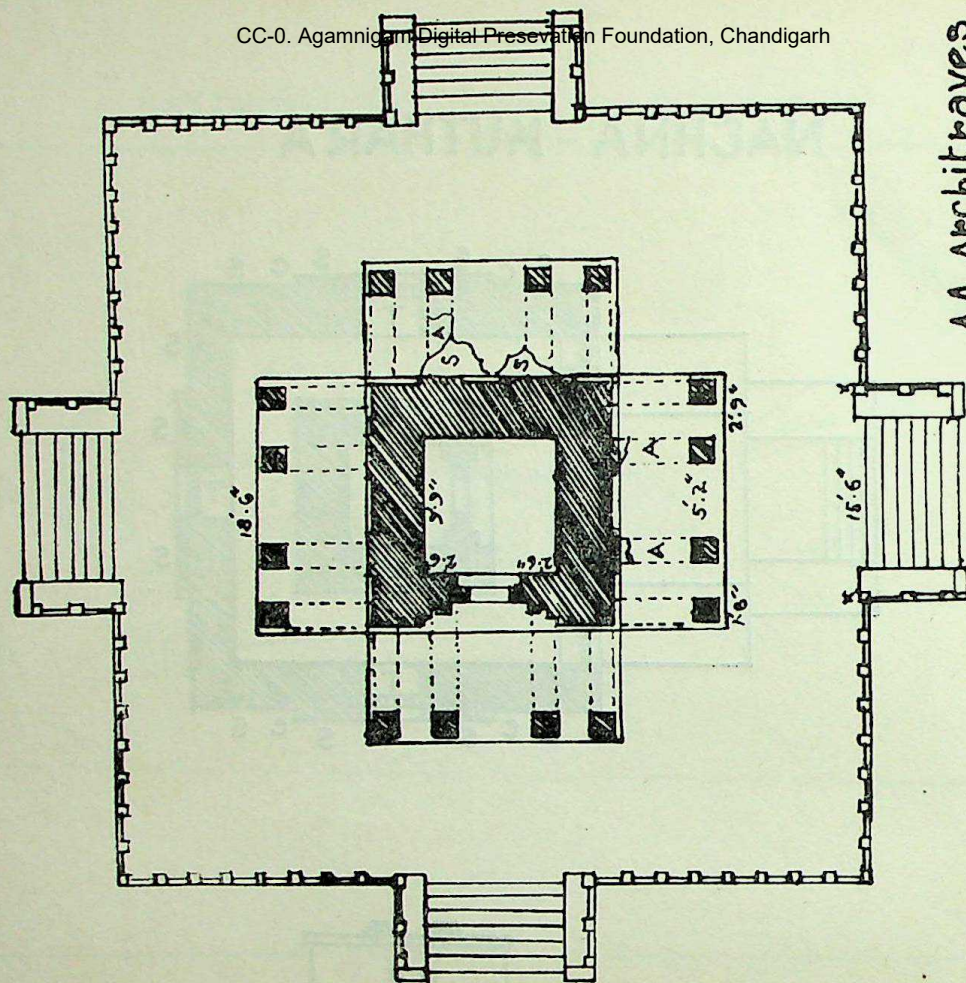
NACHNA - KUTHARA A



c-cave-holes with figures of Lions.
 s-small statues in niches.
 T-Trellises of stone.



DEOGARH



A.A. Architraves
S.S. Roofing slabs

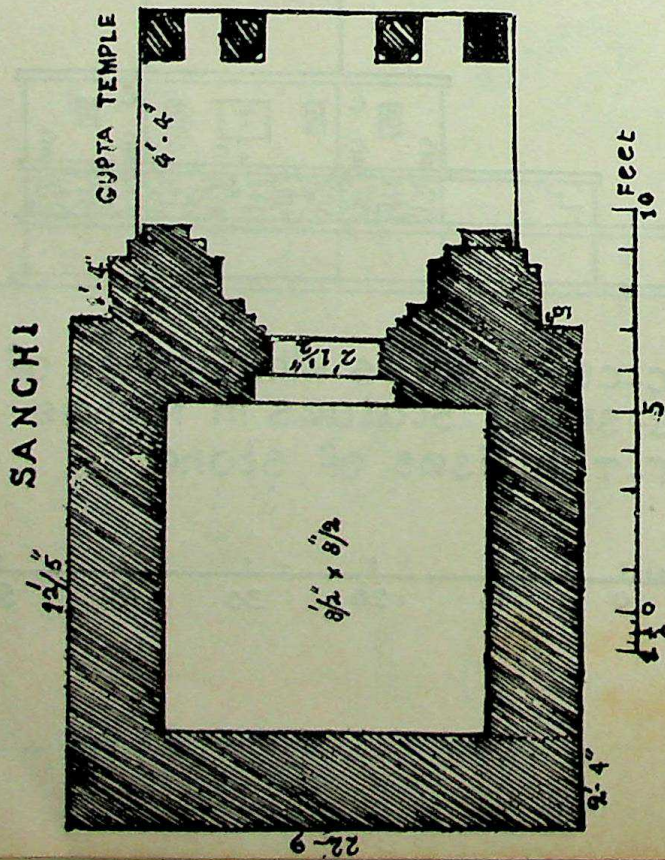




Plate 1. Torana of the Eastern Gateway of the Bharhut Stupa, 1st c B.C.



Plate 2. Pillar half-medallion showing a horse accompanied by a man and woman, Bharhut, 2nd-1st c B.C.



Plate 3. Chulakoka Yakshi, Bharhut, 2nd-1st c B.C.



Plate 4. Sudarsana Yakshi, Bharhut, 2nd-1st c B.C.



Plate 5. Worship of Stupa, Bharhut,
2nd-1st c B C.



Plate 6. Cross-bar medallion bearing a full blown lotus of
Bharhut Stupa, 2nd-1st c B.C.



Plate 7. Seated Buddha, Mankuwar, 5th c A.D.

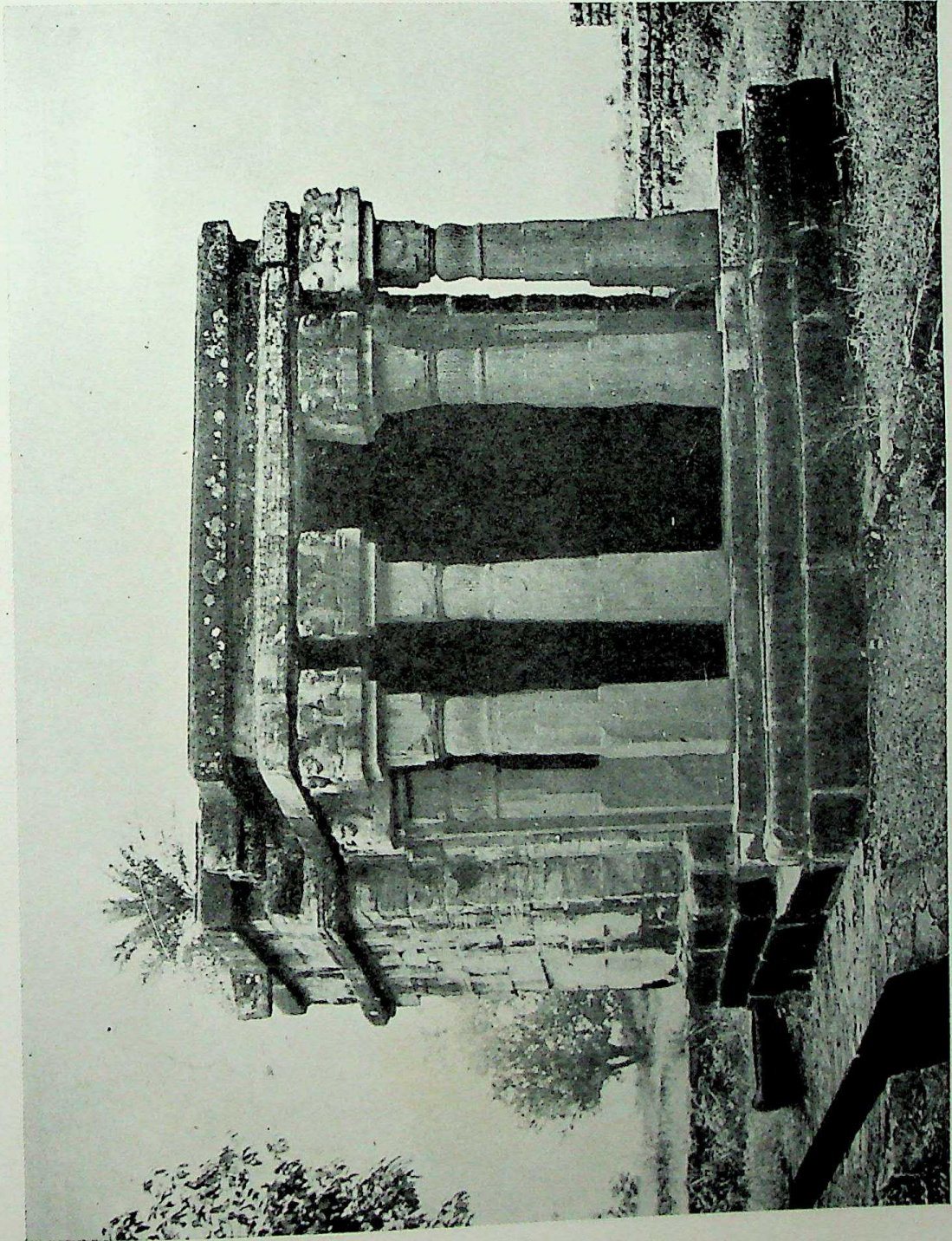


Plate 8. General view of Gupta Temple, Sanchi, 5th c A.D.



Plate 9. General view of the Temple, Tigwa, 5th c A.D.

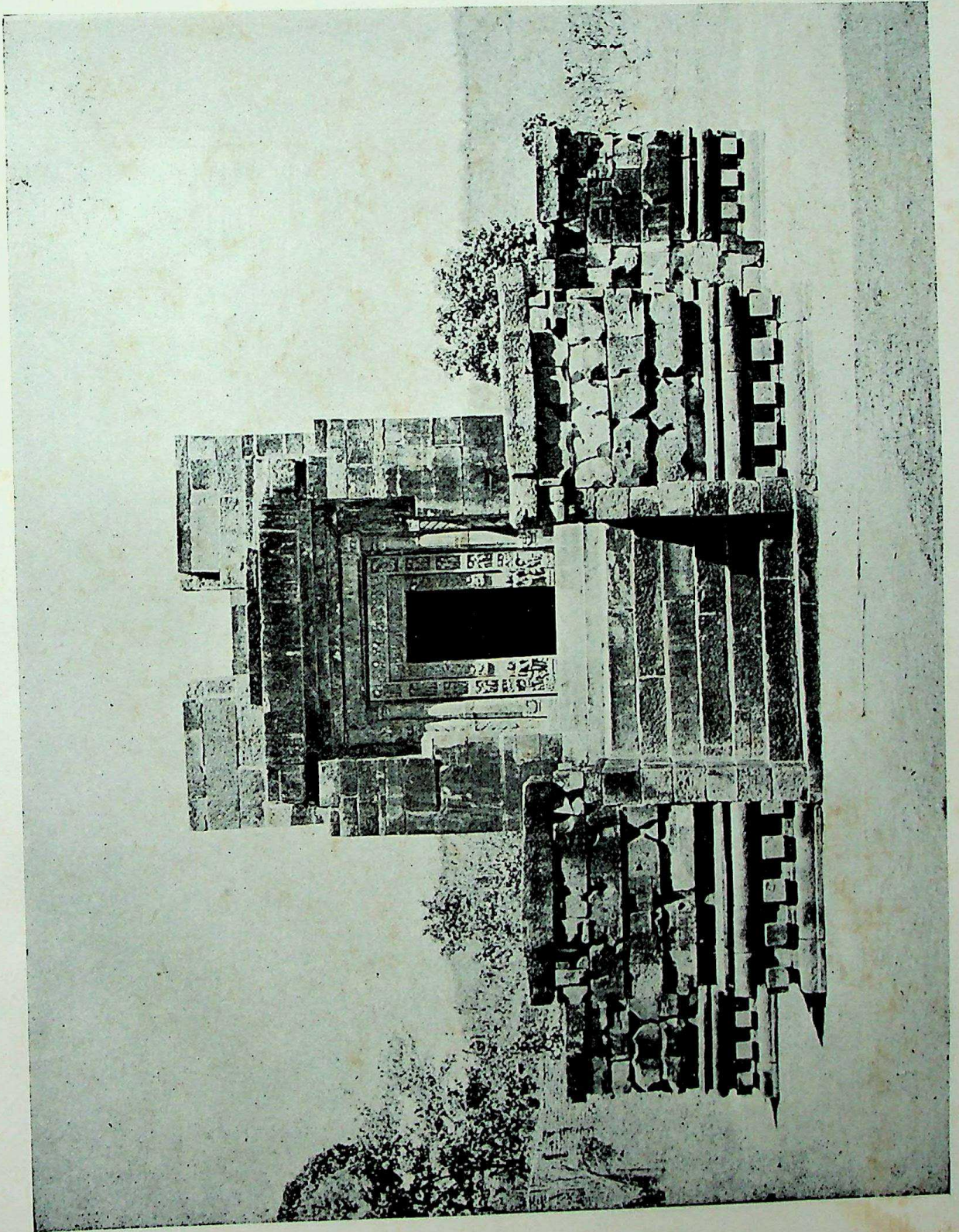


Plate 10. General view of the Parvati Temple, Nachna.



Plate 11. Ekamukha Sivalinga, Gupta, 5th c A.D., Nachana Kuthara, M.P.

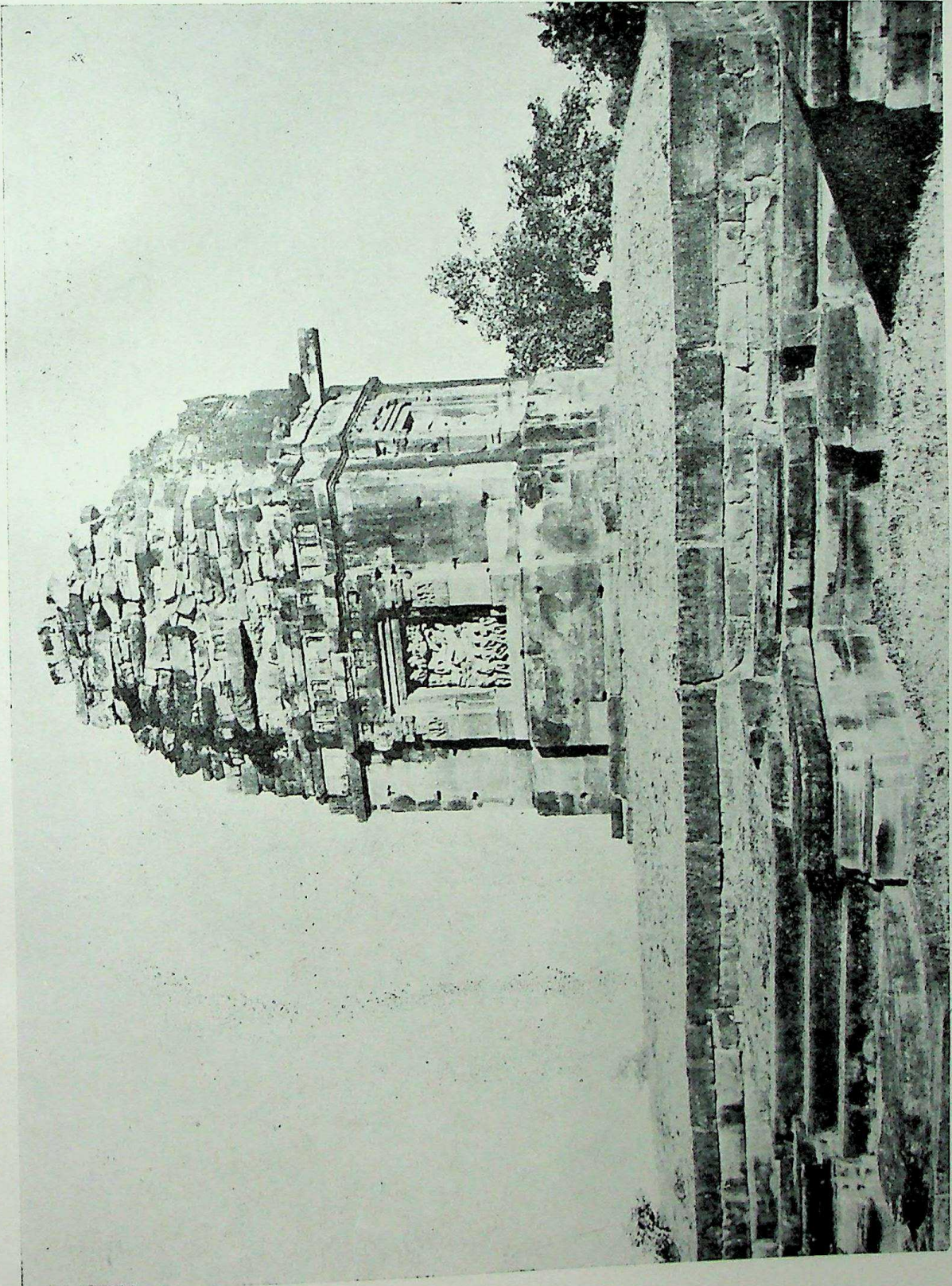


Plate 12. Gupta Temple view from South, Deogarh.



Plate 13. Doorway of Gupta Temple, Deogarh.



Plate 14. Panch-mukha Linga of Siva, Bhita, 2nd c B.C.



Plate 15. Four-faced Yaksha, Bhita, 2nd-1st c B.C.

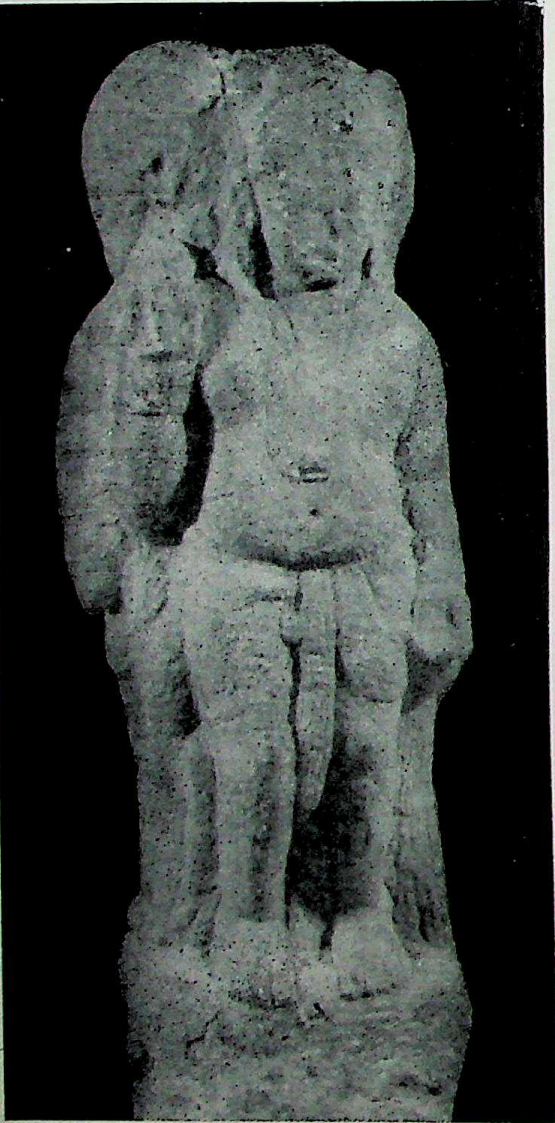


Plate 16. Four-faced Yaksha, Bhita, 2nd-1st c B.C.

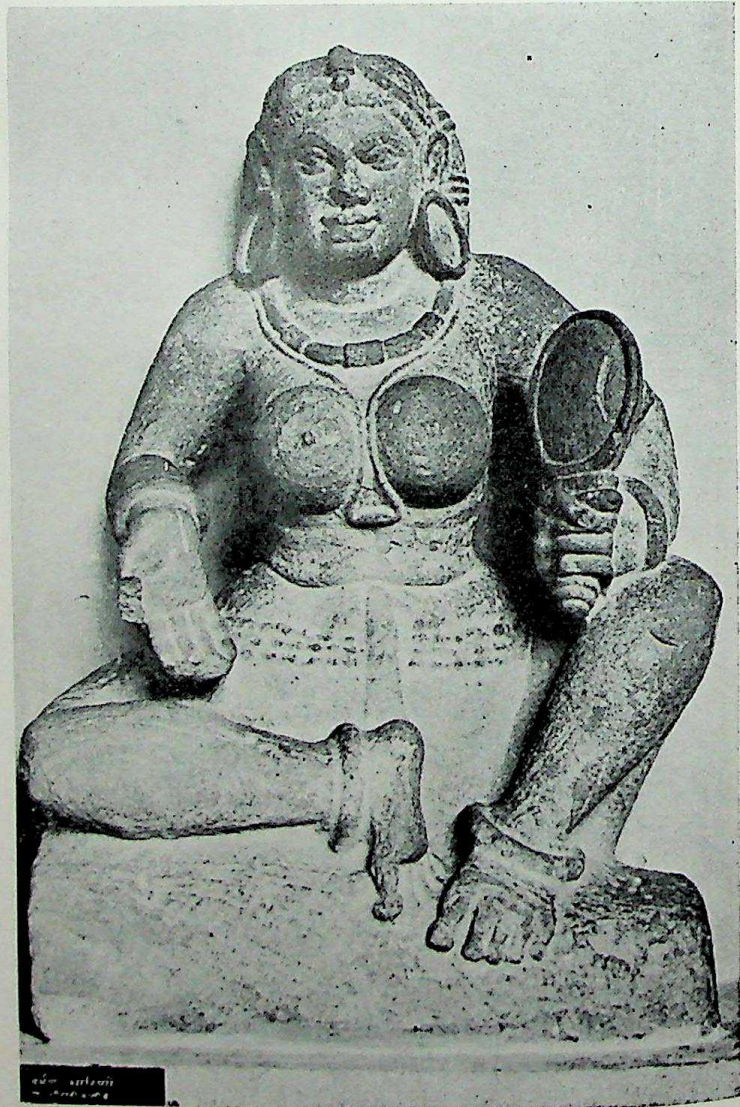


Plate 17. Darpana Yakshini, Kausambi, 3rd c A.D.



Plate 18. Siva-Parvati, Kosam, A.D. 217.

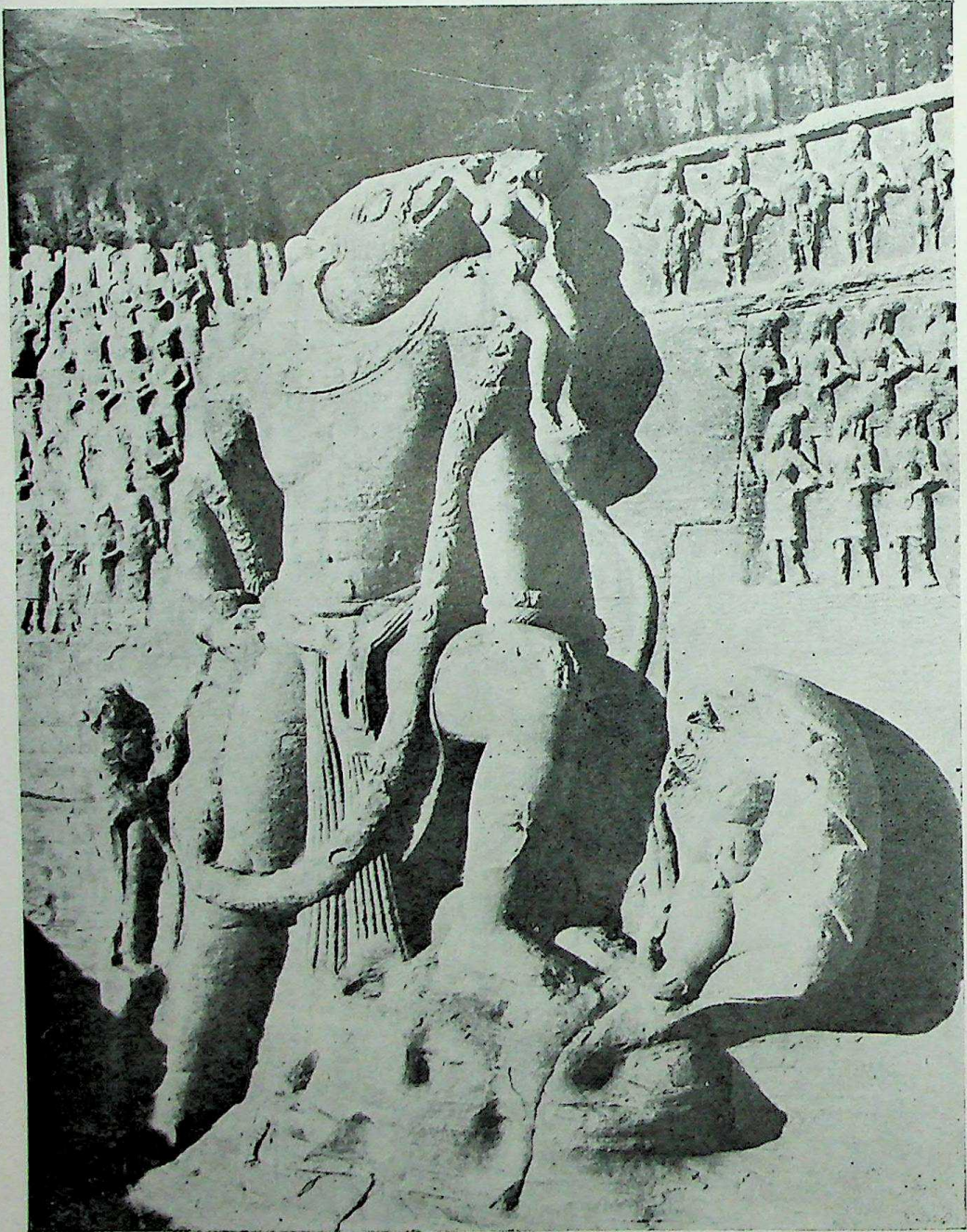


Plate 19. Close-up view of Varha, Udaigiri Cave No. 6, First quarter of 5th c A.D.

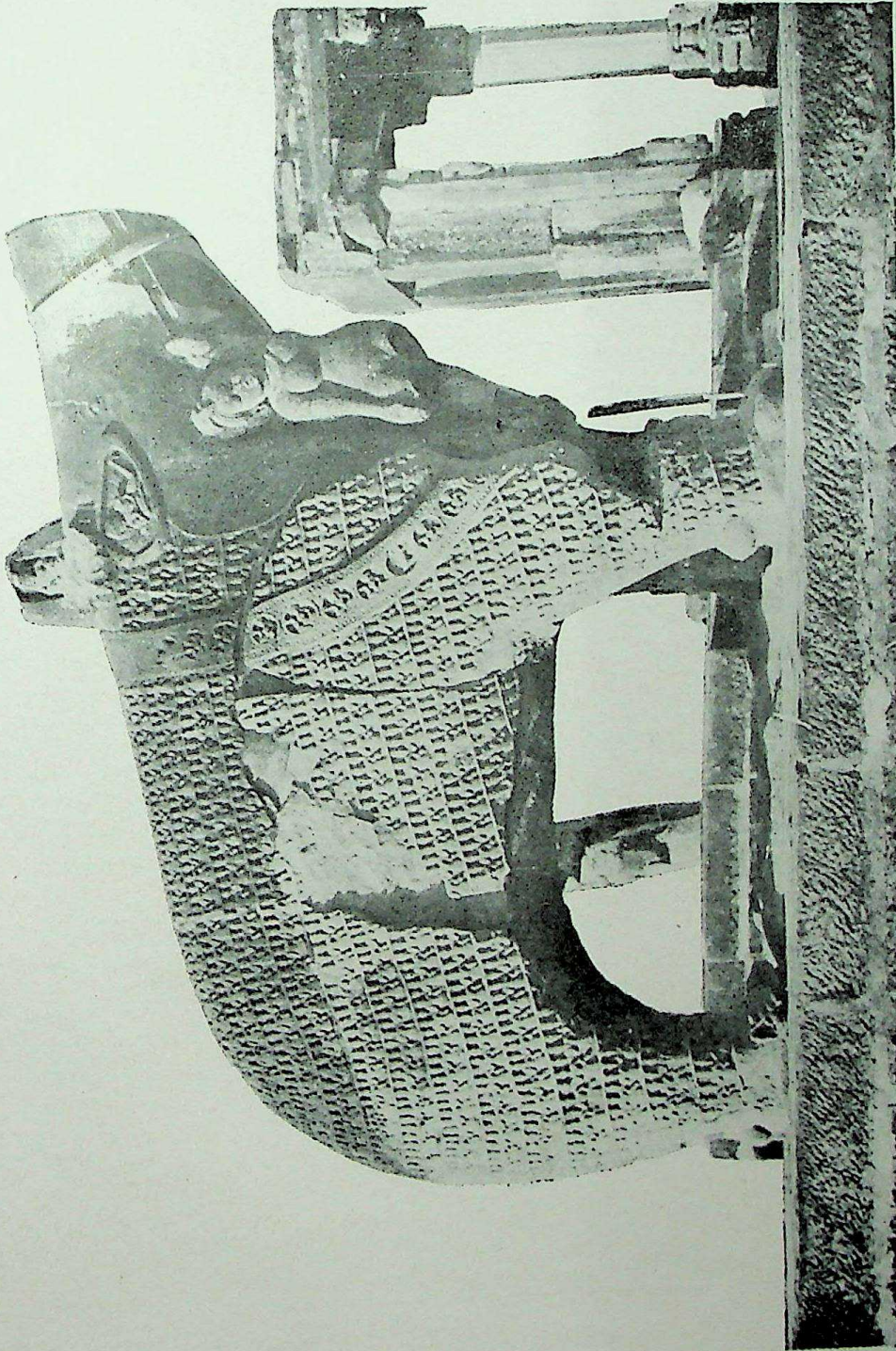


Plate 20. Close-up view of the Varha, Eran, 6th c A.D.



Plate 21. Close-up view of Dwarpal, Cave No. 6, Udaigiri.
First quarter of 5th c A.D.



Plate 22. Close-up view of Dwarpal, Cave No. 6, Udaigiri. First quarter of 5th c A.D.

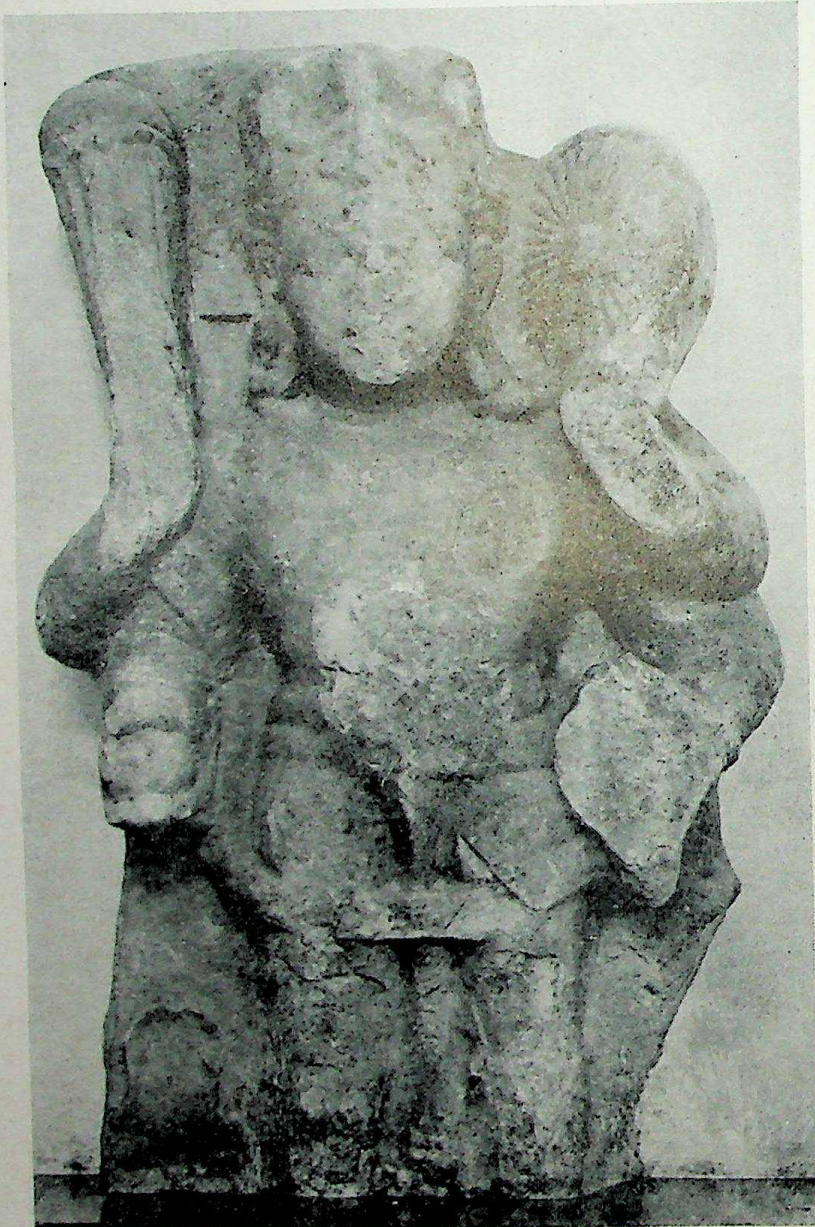


Plate 23. Standing Vishnu, Bhita, 3rd-4th c A.D.



Plate 24. Close-up view of Vishnu, Udaigiri. Cave No. 6, First quarter of 5th c A.D.



Plate 25. Close-up view of Vishnu, Cave No. 6. Udaigiri. First quarter of 5th c A.D.



Plate 26. Close-up view of Vishnu image, Eran, 5th c A.D.



Plate 27. Bust of Nataraja, Gupta, 5th c A.D., Nachana Kutthara, M.P.

Plate 28. Bust of a male figure, Bhumara, 5th c A.D.



Plate 29. Carved stone slab, Bhumara, 5th c A.D.



Plate 30. The fight between Jarasandha and Bhima, Garhwa, 5th c A.D.

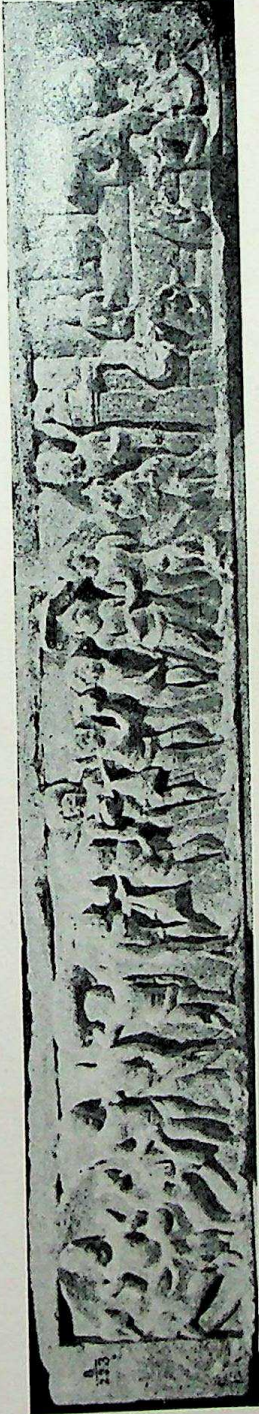


Plate 31. Lintel showing Surya riding a chariot, Garhwa, 5th c A.D.



Plate 32. Lintel showing a procession, Garhwa, 5th c A.D.



Plate 33. Lintel with Visvarupa Vishnu, Garhwa, 5th c A.D.



Plate 34. Lintel with Chandra and Rohini in a big crescent, Garhwa, 5th c A.D.



Plate 35. Lintel showing dance scenes, Gupta, early 6th c A.D., Deogarh.



Plate 36. Chaturmukha Linga, Kosam, 5th c A.D.



Plate 37. Nataraja, Gupta, 5th c A.D., Tumam, M.P.

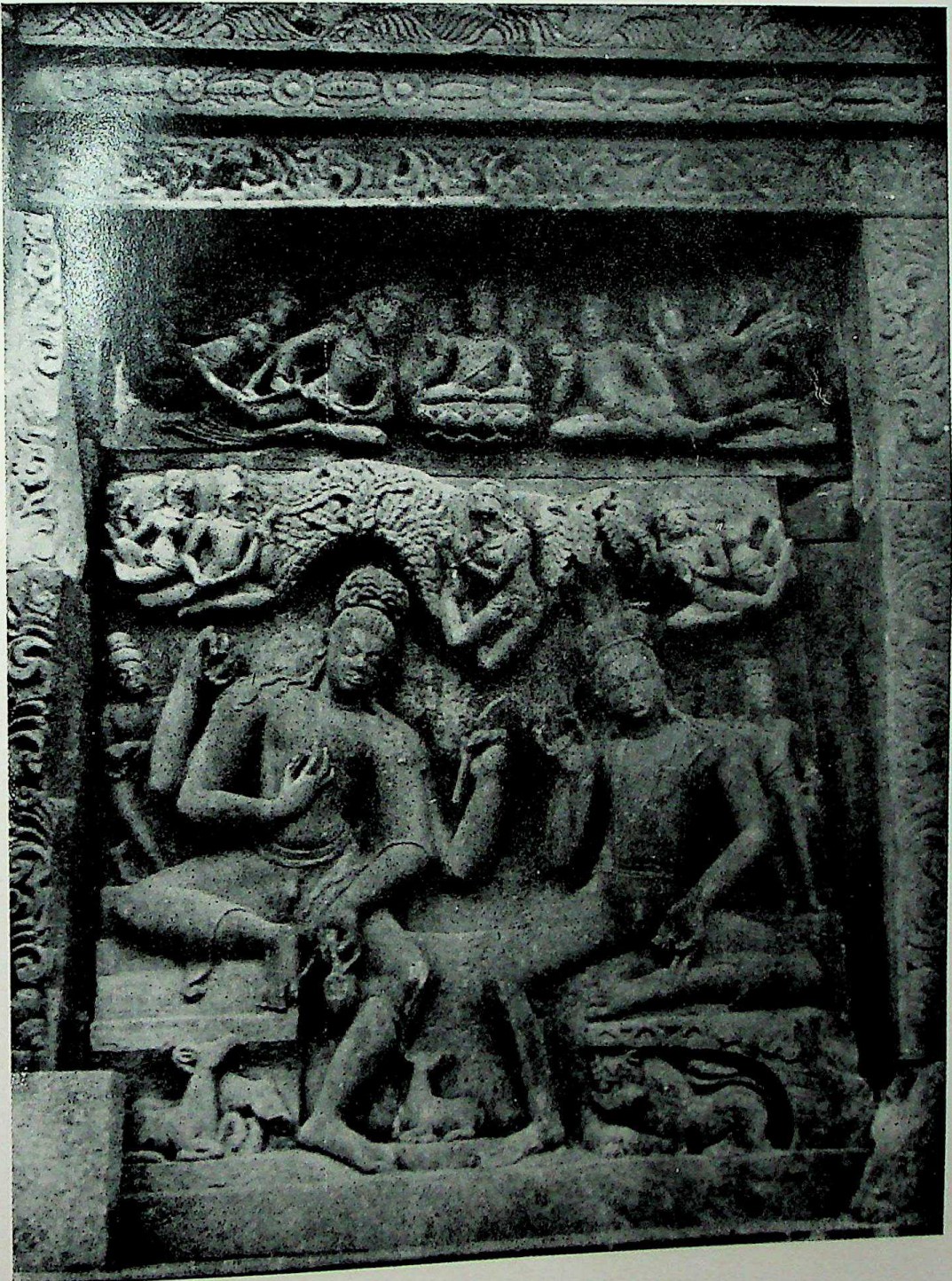


Plate 38. Nara Narayana, Deogarh, Early 6th c A.D.

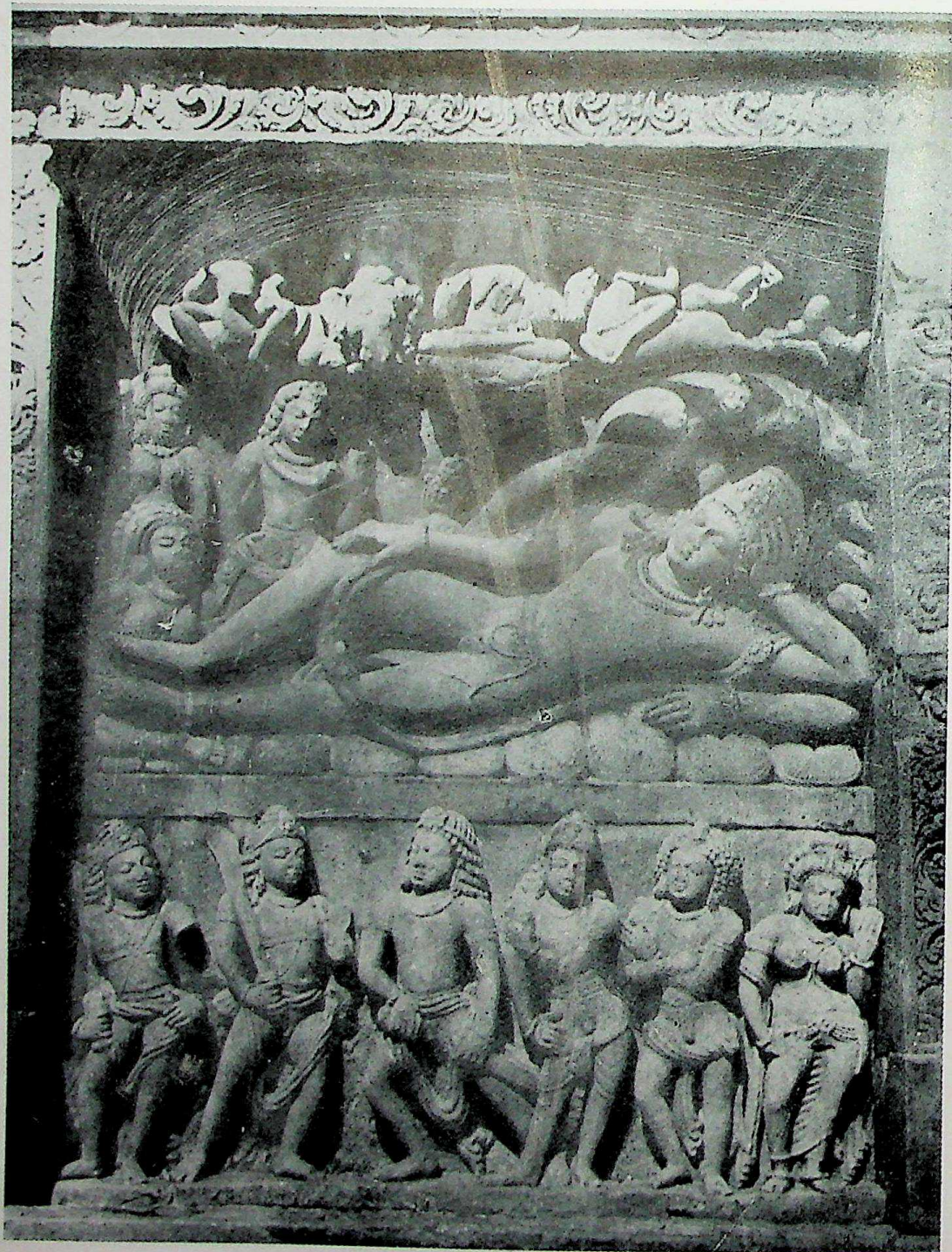


Plate 39. Shersah Panel, Deogarh. Early 6th c A.D.

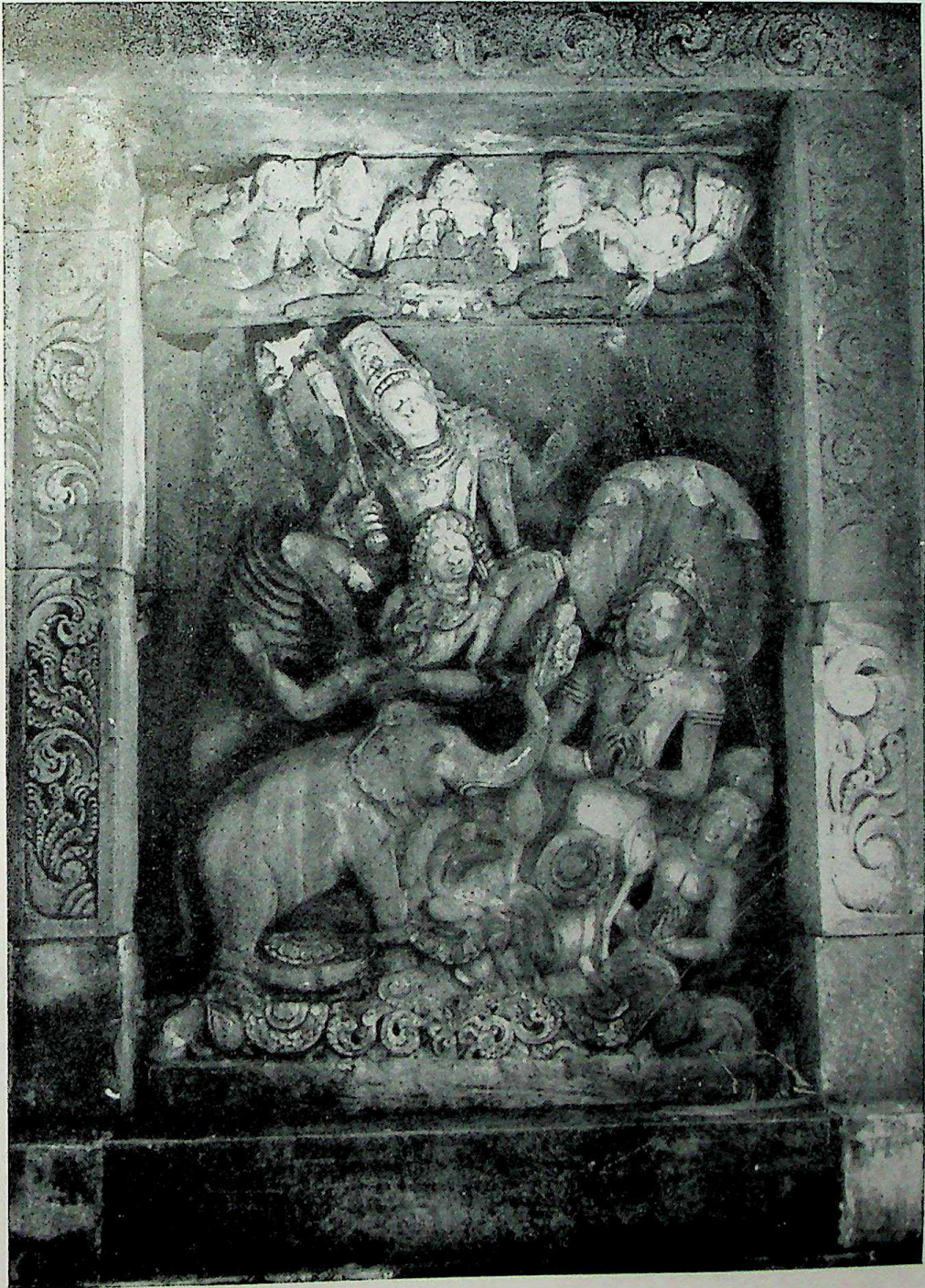


Plate 40. Gajendra Moksha, Dasawantra Temple, Deogarh. Early 6th c A.D.



Plate 41. Devaki handing over child Krishna to Vasudeva, Deogarh.
Early 6th c A.D.



Plate 42. Rama redeeming Ahilya, Deogarh. Early 6th c A.D.



Plate 43. Lakshmana disfiguring Surpanakha, Deogarh. Early 6th c A.D.



Plate 44. Kubera, Pabhosa, 7th c A.D.

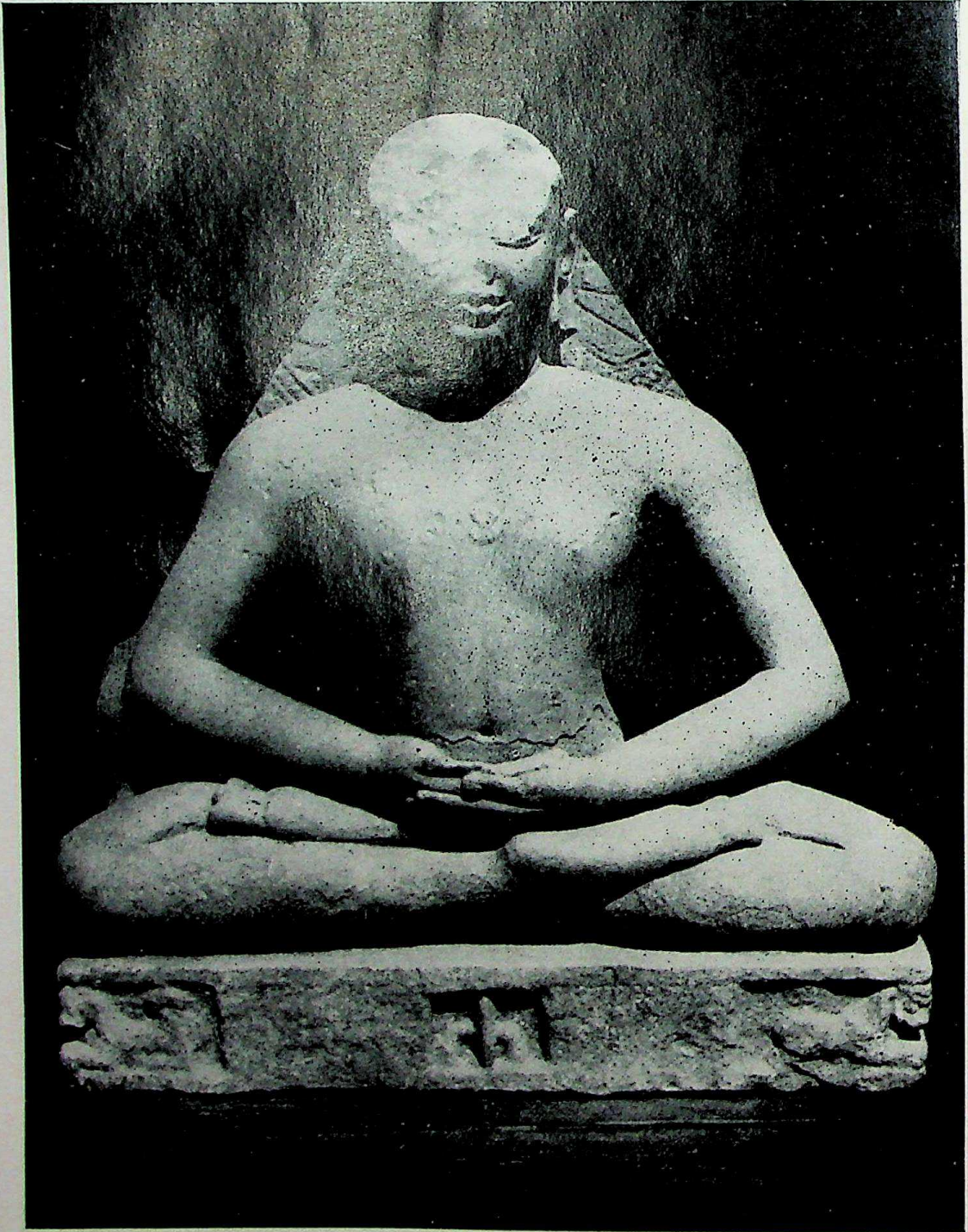


Plate 45. Jain Tirthankara, Vidisha, 4th c A.D.



Plate 46. Jain Tirthankara, Vidisha, 4th c. A.D.



Plate 47. Jain Tirthankara, Vidisha, 4th c A.D.



Plate 48. Terracotta toy-cart (Mrchchhakatika), Kaushambi, 1st c B.C.

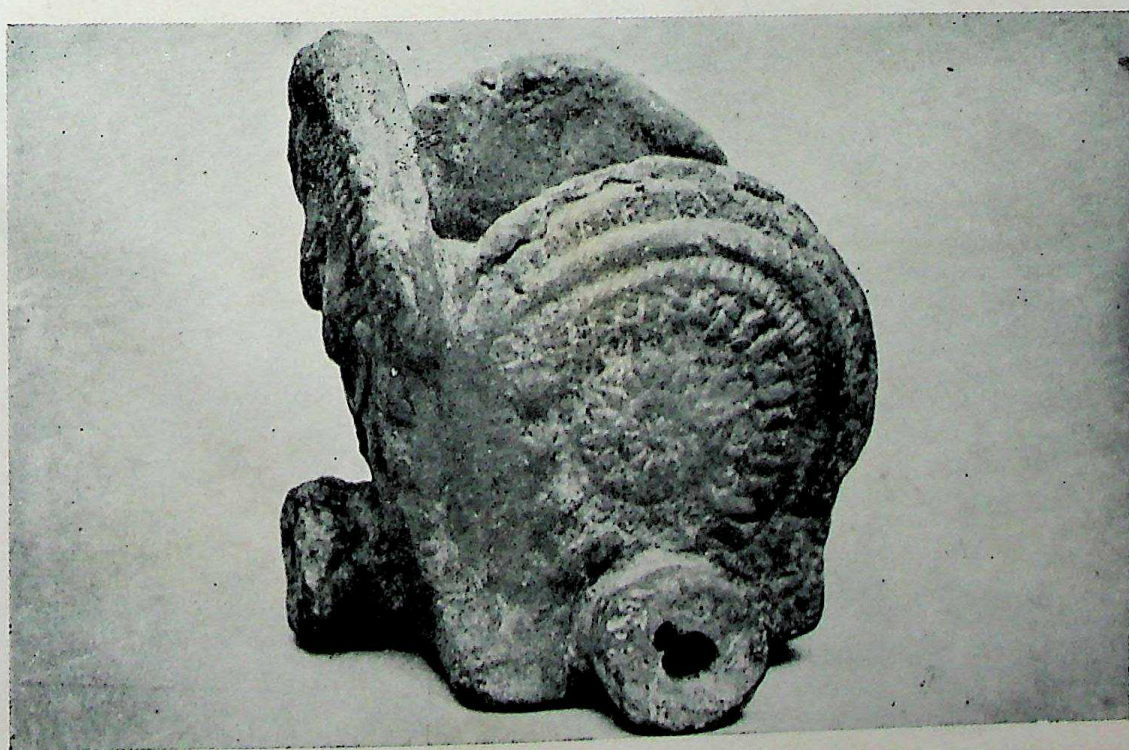


Plate 49. Terracotta toy-cart (Mrchchhakatika), Kausambi, 1st. c B.C.



Plate 50. Terracotta seals, Bhita, 1st-2nd c A.D.



Sundeeep Prakashan
DELHI



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